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Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 22 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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01-59469 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

(b) Voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(A/56/5/Add.5, A/56/66 and Add.1, A/56/132 and A/56/436)

1. **Ms. Acorda** (United Nations Board of Auditors), introducing the report of the Board of Auditors on the audited financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 2000 (A/56/5/Add.5) and the report of the Board of Auditors on the implementation of its recommendations (A/56/132) on behalf of the Chairman of the United Nations Board of Auditors, said that the Board had had to qualify its audit opinion on the financial statements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) based on a limitation of scope in respect of a total of $43.5 million of implementing partner expenditure. For the audit year 2000, the Board had attempted to obtain audit assurance from the internal control systems of UNHCR in order to validate implementing partner expenditures instead of relying only on the audit certificates it had received. It had considered, however, that the uncertainty regarding the expenditure incurred by some implementing partners needed to be reflected in the Board's current audit opinion.

2. UNHCR had secured independent audit certificates to cover $330 million, or 79 per cent, of 1999 expenditures incurred by implementing partners and had taken action to strengthen controls over 42 major implementing partners, following the identification of significant systemic weaknesses by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The income of UNHCR had declined by 28 per cent since 1996 and reserves and fund balances had declined by 53 per cent, as at 31 December 2000. UNHCR had therefore taken action to limit expenditure levels to the level of expected income. Expenditures of $781,651 had been incurred for the purchase of unnecessary modules of its integrated system project. In selecting a contractor to implement the project, UNHCR had rejected a bid of $8.9 million in favour of one of $17.9 million, even though the more expensive bid had been judged just three percentage points better than the lower bid. In some countries visited by the Board, UNHCR had engaged in activities such as infrastructure development, including road building and bridge construction, designed to assist the whole population rather than focusing on the specific needs of refugees. In 2001, however, UNHCR had initiated a review to ensure that priority was given to its core mandate within the limits of expected donor contributions. Lastly, the Board noted that UNHCR had yet to establish a reliable system for establishing accurate information on the size and characteristics of the refugee population.

3. In keeping with its normal practice, the Board would follow up on the implementation of its recommendations, some of which had already been implemented by UNHCR.

4. The report of the Board on the implementation of its recommendations summarized the results of its review of actions taken by the audited organizations to implement the Board's recommendations and the extent to which the organizations had complied with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 52/212 B, particularly with respect to the need for specification of timetables for the implementation of recommendations, the disclosure of office holders to be held accountable, and the establishment of an effective mechanism to strengthen oversight in regard to the implementation of audit recommendations. The report covered 15 organizations on which the Board reported on a biennial basis and included general comments by the Board based on its own follow-up activities and on the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the United Nations and its funds and programmes for the biennium ended 31 December 1999 (A/56/66 and Add.1). It addressed those recommendations that were under implementation, those that had not been implemented and those that had been overtaken by events and therefore could not be implemented.

5. The Board's review disclosed that in the current reporting period only one of the 15 organizations had not included timetables for the implementation of the majority of recommendations. The Board recommended that the organization in question, the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) should comply with the requirement to include timetables for the implementation of the Board's recommendations.

6. With reference to 1998-1999, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was the only one out of 15 organizations that had not provided the Board with information on office holders to be held accountable for the implementation of the majority of recommendations. The Board recommended that the Tribunal should comply with the requirements to identify office holders responsible for implementing recommendations.

7. In general, the organizations had continued to operate effective mechanisms to strengthen oversight in regard to the implementation of audit recommendations. Of the 208 recommendations that had been made in respect of the 15 organizations covered in the report, 130 had been fully implemented, 72 were under implementation, 1 had not been implemented and, in the remaining 5 cases, the organizations had not been able to implement the recommendations, as they had been overtaken by events.

8. The Board took note of the two requests for action contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on financial reports and audited financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors (A/56/436). Concerning the recommendation of ACABQ that UNHCR should be audited biennially, the Board would renew discussions with UNHCR during the next audit cycle and report on the outcome of those discussions in its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. With regard to the request that the Board should concentrate, in its reports on the implementation of its recommendations, on indicating the extent to which such recommendations had been implemented and on their impact, the Board would address the concerns of ACABQ in its next report on the subject, following consultations with the administration.

9. **Mr. Connor** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations and its funds and programmes for the biennium ended 31 December 1999 (A/56/66 and Add.1), said that the Administration attached great importance to the timely implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. For example, in response to the Board's recommendation that clear guidelines should be established to determine the circumstances under which advances could be made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs from the unearmarked Disaster Relief Assistance Fund, a financial task force had been established within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to monitor, on a regular basis, the status of the unearmarked account, review requests for unearmarked funds and make recommendations on the allocation of such funds on the basis of established criteria. Also, following the Board's recommendation that there should be closer coordination between the General Legal Division and the Procurement Division in contract preparation and approval, the Procurement Division and the General Legal Division now held regular meetings to review the work programme and the status of procurement exercises requiring legal assistance.

10. The administration took note of the recommendation contained in the report of ACABQ that the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board should focus less on describing how the Administration intended to implement the Board's recommendations and instead indicate briefly the actions taken and results achieved. It should be borne in mind, however, that the implementation of recommendations was often a series of processes the results of which could be measured only over a period of time. Responsibility for the implementation of recommendations, moreover, lay with department heads and programme managers. The Secretariat, however, would provide assistance where needed and continue to monitor the progress of funds and programmes in the implementation of the Board's recommendations.

11. **Mr. Ronse** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that the European Union approved the report of the Board of Auditors on the audited financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as well as the report of ACABQ on that report. The Union was pleased to note that UNHCR had succeeded in reducing by $186.5 million the level of current- and prior-year expenditure for which sub-project monitoring reports had not been received. It noted, however, that the Board had qualified its audit opinion on the financial statements of UNHCR on account of a

number of irregularities that had existed for several years as well as its identification of serious inadequacies in the verification and validation of some $32 million of expenditure incurred by implementing partners. It noted, further, that UNHCR and the Board had been denied access to the accounts of some implementing partners.

12. While the European Union welcomed the fact that UNHCR had succeeded in securing independent audit certificates to cover $330 million of expenditures incurred by implementing partners during 1990, it believed that measures should be taken to improve the quality of the certificates. The administration of UNHCR should also take prompt and effective measures to ensure that the justified recommendations of the Board of Auditors for improved monitoring and more stringent application of accounting rules were put into effect by local offices and implementing partners.

13. The deteriorating financial situation of UNHCR was a matter of concern and the Office should take action to limit expenditure levels to the level of expected income. The management of information technology, in particular, of the integrated system project, was another area of concern. The European Union regretted the lack of a prior assessment of the advantages of the new system, the high cost of certain unnecessary purchases and the fact that, after the expenditure of $8.7 million, the integrated system project remained non-operational.

14. The European Union noted with satisfaction, however, that the vast majority of the 15 organizations listed in the report of the Board of Auditors had substantially improved their rate of implementation of the Board's recommendations compared with the biennium 1996-1997. It would nevertheless be useful if the reports of the Board and of the Secretary-General indicated the results achieved in the implementation of the Board's recommendations.

15. **Ms. Rodsmoen** (Norway) said that her delegation had repeatedly expressed concern about the over-reliance of UNHCR on voluntary funding from a small group of countries, with only 10 countries providing 90 per cent of the contributions. As one of the major contributors, Norway was concerned about the extent to which extrabudgetary resources were used to finance core activities.

16. Her delegation regretted that, once again, the Board of Auditors had had to qualify its audit opinion on the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR. However, it was pleased with the resolute response of UNHCR to the Board's recommendations. Both the Board and UNHCR were to be commended for having followed up on recommendations from previous years. The audit pointed to the need for stricter control of the operations of field offices and implementing partners. Her delegation was concerned about the Advisory Committee's comment that some implementing partners had allegedly denied access to their accounting records (A/56/436, para. 6). It trusted that UNHCR would continue to introduce new mechanisms for dealing with such practices and hoped that the measures to be taken to improve expense reporting and control of the payments made to implementing partners would have the desired results.

17. UNHCR had accepted the Board's recommendation with respect to the appropriateness of engaging in projects that did not directly assist refugees (A/56/5/Add.5, para. 11 (e)), in line with the High Commissioner's policy of distinguishing between core and non-core activities. However, that distinction should serve only as a guide as to the part UNHCR could play in the international division of labour and should not be used as an excuse for neglecting the Office's non-core activities. It was somewhat insular to criticize UNHCR for efforts that benefited the entire local community, both refugees and non-refugees. There was a need to coordinate the efforts of various international organizations for the benefit of those they were supposed to serve, rather than to focus narrowly on their separate mandates. UNHCR had a special responsibility to coordinate its efforts to provide durable solutions for refugees; such coordination was very much a core function.

18. **Ms. Wynes** (United States of America) said that the Board of Auditors, as the external oversight body for the United Nations and its specialized agencies, had an essential role to play in the ongoing efforts to improve financial management and accountability for the Organization's resources. In the report before the Committee (A/56/5/Add.5), the Board recommended, inter alia, that the oversight of field offices should be strengthened, that expenditure associated with projects should be reviewed and that the integrated information system project should be implemented expeditiously. Those important recommendations, when implemented, should improve the operational effectiveness of UNHCR.

19. She welcomed the complimentary tone of the report, which reflected the positive working relationship between the Board of Auditors and UNHCR. She noted, however, that the Board had had to qualify its audit opinion because UNHCR had been unable to provide assurances that $96 million paid in advances to its implementing partners could be accounted for as at 31 December 2000. UNHCR had succeeded in reducing the backlog of sub-project monitoring reports to $8.5 million as at June 2001; her delegation welcomed those efforts. However, it noted that $35 million of other expenditure incurred by implementing partners could not be validated. That meant that there was a total of $43.5 million for which UNHCR could not fully account.

20. Her delegation expected UNHCR to be more stringent in holding field managers accountable. It would like to have information on what steps had been taken to strengthen oversight at the field office level, as well as on the status of advances made to implementing partners from 1996 to 2000. It endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that UNHCR should determine whether the failure by one country to provide access to the accounting records of implementing partners reflected a deliberate lack of cooperation and it agreed that, if that was the case, the matter should be addressed by the High Commissioner and, if necessary, be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General.

21. Her delegation endorsed the Board's recommendations that UNHCR should focus its efforts on projects that directly aided refugees and that it should ensure that accurate information was maintained on the size and characteristics of the refugee population. It would like to know what specific steps UNHCR had taken to comply with those recommendations.

22. She shared the Board's concern that after three years of effort and the expenditure of $8.7 million the integrated information system was still not operational. UNHCR should address the Board's findings in that regard and move ahead with the implementation of the project.

23. It was vital to ensure that the resources provided by Member States and through voluntary contributions to UNHCR were used effectively and for their intended purpose. Her delegation therefore looked forward to the expeditious implementation of the audit recommendations and endorsed the views by the Advisory Committee in that connection.

24. Regarding the second report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations and its funds and programmes for the biennium ended 31 December 1999 (A/56/66 and Add.1) and the report of the Board of Auditors on the implementation of its recommendations (A/56/132), she was pleased to note that managers were seeking to improve their operations by implementing the Board's recommendations promptly and urged that those efforts should continue, for a comprehensive audit process must include follow-up and evaluation of the effectiveness of recommendations.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*) (A/56/6 and Corr.1, A/56/7 and A/56/16)

25. **Ms. Sultan** (Bahrain) said that her delegation supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China concerning the proposed programme and budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

26. While it appreciated the efforts that had been made to introduce results-based budgeting, her delegation endorsed the statements by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and the Chairperson of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) concerning the lack of clarity and specificity in the expected accomplishments and in the description of indicators of achievement.

27. The programme of activities and the budget narratives should reflect the priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. In some sections of the budget, for example section 22 (Human rights) and section 8 (Legal affairs), that had unfortunately not been done. Her delegation supported the recommendations of CPC that the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for those sections should be reviewed. It was very important to ensure consistency between the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement in the programme budget and those in the medium-term plan.

28. Her delegation wished to see improvements in results-based budgeting introduced progressively so as to make it an effective tool for administration and for the evaluation of the programme, as well as a means of

ensuring the accountability of those who were responsible for budget implementation.

29. Her delegation considered that the proposed programme budget should be in conformity with the previous one with respect to real resources, despite the significant increase in the Organization's activities in recent years. Any attempt to impose a ceiling on overall budget resources would have an adverse impact on the implementation of the activities and programmes mandated by the legislative bodies of the Organization.

30. Her delegation welcomed the reduction in the vacancy rates budgeted and hoped that the Fifth Committee would adopt the proposed vacancy rate of 5 per cent for Professional posts and 2 per cent for General Service posts. It was important that the vacancy rate should not be used as a means of making economies and reducing the expenditure of the Organization.

31. Bahrain had always paid its contributions to the budget of the Organization in full and on time. Despite the increase in its share of the budget the previous year as a result of changes in the scale of contributions, the number of its nationals in the Secretariat remained almost negligible. An effort should be made to respect the principle of geographical distribution in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter by recruiting nationals of non-represented and under-represented States in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/258. Fair and clear criteria should also be established for the promotion of staff.

32. **Mr. Ligaba** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Committee's 9th meeting. He was pleased that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 had been submitted in fascicle form and in a timely manner. However, further improvement was needed in areas such as consolidated information on training, standardized reports on publications, workload indicators and proposals regarding the establishment or reclassification of posts.

33. The level of the budget must reflect a correlation between resources and mandated programmes and activities and must therefore be free of any arbitrary ceiling. He was concerned about the freezing of the budget, in recent years, at the level of nearly a decade earlier, and about the negative real growth in the estimates for 2002-2003. It was possible to provide for real growth in the budget while maintaining efficiency. He appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure that the priorities of the medium-term plan were reflected in the proposed programme budget. More resources should have been allocated to the sections relating to economic and social issues, particularly regional cooperation for development. The continued high vacancy rates under budget sections that related to the regional commissions and, in particular, Africa, called for additional efforts on the part of the Secretariat to speed up the recruitment process.

34. Extrabudgetary resources made up a significant share of the funding of certain activities, yet those resources should be the exception rather than the rule and should merely complement regular-budget resources. His delegation shared the Advisory Committee's position on the management of posts funded with such resources.

35. Results-based budgeting techniques should be applied gradually and incrementally to the preparation of the proposed programme budget, and particular care should be taken in preparing indicators of achievement, given the Organization's unique features. Since the objectives of the United Nations might not be attained in a single biennium or medium-term plan period, adjustments in future budgets were to be expected.

36. **Ms. Dinić** (Croatia) said that the commitments set out in the Millennium Declaration should be taken into account in the deliberations on the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003. The United Nations would not be able to deal with the global agenda unless it received sufficient budgetary resources and unless the Member States and the Secretariat cooperated fully. She welcomed the introduction of the results-based budgeting format, which would make the Organization's achievements and effectiveness easier to measure. Staff costs must be properly monitored, as the Advisory Committee had indicated. She supported the implementation of management reform, including reforms in the areas of human resources and information technology policy.

37. The proposed programme budget should provide adequate resources for the implementation of mandated activities, in compliance with the priorities set out in the medium-term plan. The United Nations had an important role to play in peacekeeping and peace-building; her delegation supported the second phase of

the peacekeeping reform process, including measures to ensure the safety and security of United Nations staff in the field and at Headquarters. However, since it was important to improve the Organization's capacity to address the interdependence between peace and development, more attention and resources should be devoted to budget sections relating to economic and social development.

38. **Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla** (Cuba) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Committee's 9th meeting. He welcomed the timely submission of the proposed programme budget and the improvements made in the budget document. The programme budget was supposed to ensure that the Organization had the capacity to implement the decisions taken by its Member States, and yet, paradoxically, attempts were being made to erode that capacity through the imposition of arbitrary limits. He reaffirmed the principle, endorsed in a number of General Assembly resolutions, that the Organization must be provided with the resources it needed to achieve all established objectives and mandates.

39. His delegation advocated greater financial discipline which it understood as the efficient use by the Secretariat of the human and financial resources available to it, within the limits established by the Financial Regulations and Rules and in conjunction with a genuine system of responsibility and accountability on the part of programme managers. The level of the proposed programme budget was slightly higher than that of the budget outline adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 55/233, and did not cover the budgetary implications of the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the report on staff security or other new activities that might arise during the biennium, which must be funded according to the budget process established by General Assembly resolution 41/213. In line with that process, the negotiated level of the budget should be adjusted to take currency fluctuations and exchange rates into account.

40. A recurring theme of the debate had been the idea that priorities should be redefined so that the budget could be kept to a certain level. It seemed that attempts were being made to use the budget to renegotiate the agreement reached on priorities under the medium-term plan, which had been universally accepted as the principal policy directive of the Organization. Moreover, attempts were being made to set priorities within programmes to reflect specific political interests, despite the relevant decisions of the General Assembly. The budget cuts effected in recent bienniums had shifted the responsibility for decisions on the use of resources from the General Assembly to the Secretariat, with a consequent redefinition of priorities.

41. Under the current proposal, a large share of the Organization's programme of work would continue to be financed from extrabudgetary resources, which had become a primary rather than a complementary source of funding in certain areas. That trend adversely affected the implementation and orientation of programmes, the principle of the collective responsibility of States under the Charter and intergovernmental monitoring of budget performance.

42. The Secretary-General was proposing that 142 new posts should be established, 33 posts should be converted and 19 posts should be abolished. His delegation welcomed the proposal for the establishment of posts that would restore the capacity lost through the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/214. It would consider each proposal in the light of its programmatic justification, including the proposed reclassifications, although it generally shared the concerns that had been expressed in that regard. The change in the arrangements for UNHCR would entail the redeployment of funding for 218 posts and the provision of a lump-sum grant with which posts would be funded. That arrangement would decrease transparency in the analysis of the Secretariat's staffing. His delegation hoped that corrective measures would be taken to improve the transparency of information in that context. It also hoped that programme managers would fully recognize the need to strengthen staff morale and promote career prospects, and endorsed the comments of the Advisory Committee in that regard (A/56/7, para. 48).

43. His delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on the results-based budgeting format. Future budget proposals should reflect the changes suggested by those bodies and should be fully in line with General Assembly resolution 55/234.

44. The budget proposal once again reflected the Secretariat's tendency to include controversial

activities and concepts which had not been approved by the General Assembly. Consequently, the narrative of section 22 (Human rights) had not been approved by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. His delegation attached great importance to that programme and hoped that it would be possible to reach conclusions acceptable to all, on the basis of established mandates. While his delegation had agreed that specific comments on the various budget sections could be made in informal consultations, it felt that that practice adversely affected the Committee's institutional memory by eliminating the possibility of recording those comments in summary records.

45. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said he welcomed the positive comments that had been made during the general debate regarding the timely issuance and high quality of the proposed programme budget. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 was the first to use a results-based budgeting format, reflecting the Administration's continuing efforts to adopt a more qualitative approach to the budgetary process. Results-based budgeting was, of course, a work in progress. He therefore welcomed the useful proposals made by the Advisory Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination regarding refinements that needed to be made and he looked forward to receiving guidance from the Fifth Committee.

46. Regarding the concern that the Secretariat was becoming top-heavy, he said that the Administration must maintain a viable pyramid in the Organization. Only 54 reclassifications had been recommended, based on the merits of individual posts; together they represented just 0.5 per cent of the total staffing table.

47. As stated by the Secretary-General in the foreword to the proposed programme budget, in formulating the budget proposal, paramount consideration had been given to ensuring that the scope and programmatic content fully addressed the priorities identified by the General Assembly, as set out in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. As to the level of the budget proposal, he noted that, for the past six years, the Secretariat had succeeded in implementing mandated programmes and activities without budgetary growth; organizational reform and efficiency measures and the introduction of new technologies had enabled it to operate more cost-effectively. A total of $2.6 billion was requested for the biennium 2002-2003, compared with $2.5 billion in 2000-2001. The former figure included a preliminary amount of $129.3 million for recosting. The Administration would provide the Committee with a revised amount in early December based on the latest information on rates of exchange and inflation. Taking into account the decline in the relative strength of the United States dollar vis-à-vis the other currencies, it seemed likely that the amount ultimately required would be higher than the preliminary figure. Indeed, once the additional expenditure for peacekeeping support, security needs and the implementation of decisions by intergovernmental bodies had been factored in, the level of the proposed programme budget might well be as high as $2.7 billion.

48. As the Secretary-General had said in his introductory statement, the Secretariat had been doing more with less. However, further budgetary constraints would seriously compromise its ability to deliver the services expected of it and to fulfil the mandates of the Organization. He trusted that the Committee would bear that point in mind during its consideration of the budget proposal.

Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Comprehensive study of honorariums payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations (continued) (A/56/311)

49. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that it was not clear to his delegation why the report before the Committee had been prepared. No such report had been requested and none was needed, since the question of honorariums did not need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. If other delegations wished to consider the report further, there were a number of points that his delegation would be glad to discuss. However, if that was not the case, he saw no need for the scheduled informal consultations.

50. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the General Assembly had last revised the level of the honorariums in 1981. The Administration had been asked to keep the matter under review. The Secretary-General had submitted his previous report on the question two years earlier, following a request by certain members of the organs in question. The Advisory Committee had recommended, in its report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/7), that the Assembly might wish to consider increasing the rates

of the honorariums. The Assembly had not, however, considered the Secretary-General's report and had taken no specific decision on the matter. The Secretariat was therefore seeking a clear answer from the General Assembly as to whether the rates of the honorariums should be revised.

51. **The Chairman** said that it was time for the Committee to take a decision on the question of honorariums. He suggested that, in the light of the clarification provided by the Controller, the scheduled informal consultations should proceed.

52. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

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Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 23 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apentang ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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(b) Voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (*continued*)

Agenda item 124: Pattern of conferences

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (*continued*)

(b) Voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (*continued*) (A/56/5/Add.5, A/56/66 and Add.1, A/56/132 and A/56/436)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that paragraph 3 of document A/56/436 referred to the recommendation that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had previously made for a biennial audit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the advantages of which far outweighed those of the current annual audit. A biennial audit would facilitate the timely submission of more audit certificates from implementing partners and would provide more time for UNHCR to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. UNHCR would continue to prepare annual budgets and interim financial statements to enable Member States to continue reviewing the Office's budgetary and financial performance on an annual basis. The accounts would, however, be closed after 24 calendar months rather than 12 months, as was currently the practice.

2. Audit was an essential and important instrument by which Member States held secretariats of the United Nations organizations accountable for the responsibilities entrusted to them. One of the most important functions of the audit process was to ensure that funds provided by Member States were used as intended and that projected results had been achieved. The latest audit of UNHCR operations had revealed that it could not be ascertained from 25 certificates covering expenditures of $77 million that the funds in question had been used in accordance with agreements concluded with the implementing parties concerned. In addition, one country had denied UNHCR access to accounting records relating to some $3 million of expenditure by implementing partners in that country.

3. Those and other findings in the report of the Board of Auditors needed to be addressed urgently and effectively. Because of the qualified audit opinion, ACABQ had considered the option of recommending against approval of the financial statements. However, in view of the management changes that the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was introducing, the Advisory Committee had recommended that UNHCR inform it by March 2002 of the progress made in addressing the shortcomings identified by the Board of Auditors.

4. The Advisory Committee had also recommended that a change should be made to the format of reporting on the implementation of recommendations of the Board of Auditors. The current reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations and the funds and programmes dwelt too much on internal processes, meetings held, units established and even guidelines promulgated. The Advisory Committee believed that those reports should be shorter, should be user-friendly and should describe improvements, results and the effects of implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. Such information should be supplied to the Board by the audited administrations when the Board was monitoring the implementation of its recommendation.

5. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation) said that the implementation of the recommendations of United Nations oversight bodies was crucial to the improvement of the administrative and financial functioning of the Organization. Some progress had been made by the 15 organizations on which the Board of Auditors reported on a biennial basis in the implementation of the recommendations of the Board relating to the biennium 1998-1999, and six organizations had achieved significant increases in their implementation rates since the biennium 1996-1997. In those organizations where the rate of implementation had declined, efforts must be made to correct the situation.

6. The Board of Auditors should pay due attention to determining the extent to which its recommendations were implemented and the corresponding reports of the Secretary-General should include information on the results achieved. When delays were noted, Member States should be presented with a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the delays and should be informed of the measures that had been taken and the time frames that had been established to correct the situation. The possibility of increasing the accountability of the programme managers in question should also be considered.

7. **Ms. Hesselmark** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) noted that, for the first time, the Board of Auditors had qualified its opinion on the accounts of UNHCR, owing to uncertainty regarding expenditure incurred by some implementing partners. While UNHCR was aware of the need to improve its interaction with its implementing partners, neither it nor the Board of Auditors had any grounds for believing that the expenditure in question was in any way irregular. The problem was the implementing partners' unacceptably long delay in reporting expenditure. UNHCR had introduced a package of measures to address the situation, one of which had been to include consideration of the issue as a specific measurement of management performance in the objectives and appraisals of senior managers. Those measures had reduced the outstanding amount by 50 per cent, and the entire sum should be cleared within the next five months. At the end of that time, UNHCR would be able to determine which implementing partners had not made their accounts available to it, and UNHCR would examine the situation in the manner proposed by the Advisory Committee.

8. With respect to information technology, UNHCR had decided to suspend the development of the integrated system project and to review the overall design to ensure its compatibility with the corporate operating model currently being defined. To improve its capacity to determine the size and characteristics of the refugee population, UNHCR was upgrading the existing registration and management systems, providing expert assistance in the field through three specialized field registration experts based in Nairobi, Abidjan and Geneva, and implementing a training module on enumeration and registration in emergencies.

9. UNHCR would continue to discuss the issue of biennial audits with the Board of Auditors and would report thereon to the General Assembly. It would also strive for more results-oriented budgeting and follow-up, improve its reporting on results achieved and clarify its criteria for prioritization.

10. **Ms. Acorda** (United Nations Board of Auditors) said that the Board appreciated the Committee's understanding of the issues surrounding the qualification of its opinion on the financial statements of UNHCR. The Board's comments and proposed actions on the two requests which the Advisory Committee had addressed to it (A/56/436, paras. 3 and 12) were reflected in the introductory statement she had made at the Committee's previous meeting. The Board noted that several speakers had supported its recommendations that UNHCR should strengthen its oversight and monitoring mechanisms at the field level and limit expenditure to the level of expected income, and had mentioned the need to implement the integrated system project expeditiously. In the light of comments made by the representatives of Norway and the United States of America at the Committee's previous meeting, the Board would assess the level of coordination of UNHCR with other organizations in decisions on project implementation. It would also address the concerns expressed regarding the need to evaluate the effectiveness of its recommendations.

Agenda item 124: Pattern of conferences (A/56/32, A/56/120/Rev.1, A/56/133, A/56/188, A/56/213 and Corr.1, A/56/261, A/56/277, A/56/293, A/56/299, A/56/300, A/56/339 and A/56/475; A/AC.198/2001/8)

11. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/56/32), said that the Committee had worked closely with the Secretariat and other bodies to draw up a draft calendar of conferences and meetings that was tailored to the needs of the Organization. It had noted with satisfaction that the Secretariat had taken into account arrangements concerning Orthodox Good Friday, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 54/248 and 55/222. It had also welcomed the efforts made to promote more effective coordination in order to avoid the scheduling of simultaneous peak periods at the various duty stations.

12. The overall utilization factor of conference services had in 2000 exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent for the four main United Nations offices. The chairpersons of bodies with utilization factors under that level had been contacted with a view to making recommendations to improve their use of resources, and the Committee had noted the concern expressed by the chairpersons of intergovernmental bodies about the methodology used to calculate the utilization factor.

13. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had recommended that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services should work with the Committee on Conferences to identify demands for conference services and adjust servicing capacity accordingly, limit the duration of meetings

and draw up guidelines for meetings. The Committee on Conferences had endorsed guidelines for the limitation of the duration of meetings, as noted in paragraph 33 of the report.

14. The conference-servicing facility in Nairobi would soon become an integral part of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The number of multilingual meetings held with the participation of the Nairobi team was increasing, and there had been cost savings, thanks to the establishment of the Nairobi interpretation service. The General Assembly should request the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to comply with the headquarters rule.

15. The Committee on Conferences had conferred with conference services managers in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna and at Headquarters on the question of the coordination of conference services, and had noted the efforts and results of global coordination. It had also concluded that the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications should further promote cooperation in that field, and should put forward concrete proposals that would make it possible to share translation, interpretation, editorial and printing services among the organizations. The General Assembly should consider strengthening the oversight and supervisory functions of the Committee on Conferences so that it could be more effective.

16. There had been an encouraging trend in the utilization of conference facilities in Bangkok and Addis Ababa, and the Committee on Conferences had advocated the sharing of experience and expertise between the Secretariat and the regional commissions. The percentage of requests by regional and other major groupings of Member States for meetings with interpretation services that had been met had risen steadily, from 84 per cent during the period 1999-2000 to 90 per cent during the period from July 2000 to June 2001; for all four major duty stations, 92 per cent of requests for interpretation had been met.

17. In order to ensure the timely submission of documents for processing, the Committee on Conferences had recommended that an effective accountability system should be established within the Secretariat. It had drawn attention to the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/300) and had called for a more extensive analysis of the reasons for the late issuance of documentation and of the resulting additional costs. The Committee had requested the Secretariat to assess the prospects for future advances in videoconferencing and communications so as to determine whether such technology could offer solutions to the outstanding technical problems of remote interpretation.

18. The persistence of excessively high vacancy rates in language service posts at some duty stations was mainly due to insufficient staff mobility, while the fairly high overall vacancy rate for language services was attributable to recruitment problems, especially for certain languages and/or language combinations. Top priority must be given to filling the vacant interpretation posts in Vienna and Nairobi. Some competitive language examinations had produced low yields, in particular those for interpreters with certain language combinations. The Committee on Conferences had therefore recommended that the programme of in-house training for interpreters should be reinstated for an initial period of one year, and it had welcomed the inter-agency initiative to address training issues through cooperation between the United Nations and other international organizations and educational institutions. A comprehensive review of productivity standards in the language services should be carried out in the light of ongoing technological innovations.

19. The Committee on Conferences had expressed support for the recommendation made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in paragraph 71 of its report (A/56/16) and recommended that, in future budget submissions, the section entitled "General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services" should group publishing activities with translation and editing rather than with interpretation services.

20. Lastly, the Committee had expressed concern about the growing disparities between English and the other official languages on the United Nations web site, and had requested the Secretariat to include information on the United Nations Offices in Nairobi and Vienna on the web site entitled "About the United Nations". It had requested that a report should be issued on the progress achieved in, and the impact of the re-engineering of the optical disk system.

21. **Mr. Chen** Jian (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) said that, since its inception, the Department had placed great emphasis on coordination. The pooling of

planning and servicing capacity among staff from different duty stations, as at the recent World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, had helped to make the use of conference-servicing facilities more cost-effective. It had also demonstrated the merits of strengthening conference services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and incorporating them into the Department.

22. The draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003 also illustrated the importance of enhanced coordination. In 2002 alone, nine major meetings would be held away from established headquarters. In the interest of global management and maximum cost-effectiveness in the use of resources, the Department should build on existing practices such as workload sharing in the translation services, staff loans in the interpretation services and lateral transfers of language staff, and should devise new ways to take full advantage of the ongoing integration process. The aim was not to create a micromanaged, unwieldy monolith that failed to take local conditions into account, but to achieve economies of scale and greater complementarity and responsiveness through judicious decisions on which areas should be centralized or decentralized.

23. He appreciated the endorsement by the Committee on Conferences of the guidelines regarding the limitation of the duration of meetings. That step could immediately enhance the efficiency and improve the quality of Secretariat services, and would address the concerns of small delegations. He hoped that the Fifth Committee would favour the modest request for greater predictability.

24. With respect to documentation, compliance with the six-week rule was the joint responsibility of the relevant Secretariat departments and the Member States. The Secretariat should conduct a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the late submission of documentation, develop an effective accountability and responsibility system and take a multifaceted approach to the problem. It was already increasing its interaction with intergovernmental bodies, establishing focal points and convening planning meetings.

25. In the past year, all the requests received for facilities for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, and 92 per cent of those received for interpretation at such meetings, had been granted as a result of the proactive and flexible approach which the Department had adopted to cope with erratic meeting patterns. To coordinate the Secretariat-wide provision of conference services, the Department was considering ways of making better use of the facilities in Bangkok and Addis Ababa. Staff had been encouraged to move to duty stations with high vacancy rates, though with limited success as the Department had been unable to offer effective incentives. The introduction of jointly held examinations for different language functions would result in the establishment of pools of successful candidates who would be able to pursue flexible career paths. In view of the need for interpreters with less common language combinations, the training formerly provided to meet that need had been reinstated on a limited scale.

26. The quality of the Department's work would depend increasingly on technological innovation. However, resource constraints sometimes forced the Department to settle for what was possible, not what was desirable. Some projects, such as the electronic Documents Registration Information and Tracking System (eDRITS), had been quite successful, while others, such as the use of voice recognition software and computer-assisted translation, had had little success to date. The Department would consolidate existing projects to give priority to the promising ones and encourage exchanges among duty stations to avoid duplication and share benefits. The project on remote interpretation was very promising, but a host of factors, such as technical feasibility, cost-effectiveness, the quality and availability of services, the ability of interpreters to adjust to a new way of working and the physical and psychological impact on the staff, must be taken into account in preparing future steps in that direction.

27. **Mr. Blinder** (Director of the Information Technology Services Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the re-engineering of the optical disk system (A/56/120/Rev.1), said that a project had been launched in early 2000 to re-engineer the optical disk system on the basis of up-to-date technology, non-proprietary standards, a standard Internet browser and standard disk media storage. The new system had started operating in June 2001 and all documents existing on the old system had been copied onto the new one. On 4 September 2001, the old system had been permanently shut down and the staff

resources shifted to undertake the remaining development work of phase 2, which was expected to continue until the end of November 2001. The parallel operations of phase 2 were expected to start in early December 2001 and the production operations in early January 2002. The re-engineered optical disk system would have full multilingual support and users would be able to conduct search operations in any of the six official languages, in line with the policy of ensuring parity among the official languages. The new system, known as the Official Document System was central to the Organization's information technology strategy and would remain a key vehicle for external and internal information delivery.

28. **Mr. Damodaran** (Editor-in-Chief of the United Nations Chronicle), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of recommendations regarding the United Nations Chronicle (A/56/339), said that, in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the General Assembly had decided in resolution 52/220 that the Chronicle should be produced four times a year in all the official languages of the United Nations. Pursuant to the Assembly's decision, the Department of Public Information had undertaken to produce a pilot edition in each of four languages, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish in order to assess comprehensively the costs and feasibility of resuming regular production of editions in those languages, which had been suspended in 1996 in the context of unavoidable cost-cutting measures. The Department's experience in producing the pilot edition through an external contractor suggested, however, that the edition would lose its value because of the lengthy period of time required for typesetting, proof-reading and layout.

29. With the advent of the Internet, the entire format of the publication had changed. It was no longer a record of events but a forum for discussion of relevant issues. The publication continued to attract contributors of stature and eminence, including heads of State and Government, United Nations and other officials, leaders in civil society, non-governmental organizations, scholars and artists. There were two possible ways of resuming publication in the six official languages. The first option was production through external contractors on the basis of secure financing that was adequate to the task of ensuring the greatest possible parity in quality and timeliness between all editions, and the second option was to co-publish the Chronicle in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish with an outside publishing house in a format and of a quality consistent with the English and French versions. The publishing house would market the Chronicle commercially and at the same time satisfy the Organization's internal needs. Resources in the amount of $1.3 million had been proposed for the production of the publication under the first option, but discussions on the cost of the second option were still continuing.

30. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/475), said that the Advisory Committee welcomed the innovation by which the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services had, at no additional cost, replaced the traditional paper-based management system for the coordination of the submission of documentation with a computerized database application. It encouraged further development of the system and urged author departments to comply with General Assembly resolution 55/222.

31. The Advisory Committee had noted that, in 1996, owing to the financial crisis of the Organization, the Department of Public Information had decided to suspend publication of the Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish editions of the Chronicle and that, in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the General Assembly had decided that the Chronicle should be produced four times a year in all the official languages of the United Nations. On the basis of information from the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee recommended that a critical assessment be undertaken by the relevant intergovernmental bodies of the utility of the Chronicle in general, including an analysis of the demand for the Chronicle in the various languages, the merits of its distribution online and the method of its publication and printing.

32. The Advisory Committee welcomed the progress that had been made in the re-engineering of the optical disk system and encouraged the Secretariat to continue to work towards unrestricted and free access to the system for all accredited non-governmental organizations. The availability of the system should be advertised as widely as possible, at United Nations

Headquarters and regional offices, as well as in the United Nations information centres.

33. On the question of remote interpretation, the Advisory Committee reiterated its encouragement of the continued exploration of the feasibility of large-scale remote interpretation, which was an application with enormous potential. The technical problems that had been encountered were not insurmountable; the Secretariat should intensify its efforts to find solutions to those problems as well as to issues pertaining to the working conditions of interpreters, and should submit a progress report on the question to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

34. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of the training initiative for interpreters for an initial period of one year, subject to the submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session of information on the results of the training activities, the continuing need for the programme and related financial arrangements.

35. In a related matter, the Advisory Committee requested that information should be provided to the Fifth Committee on the comparative costs of commercial translation and current arrangements for contractual translation at the United Nations. Relevant information should also be provided concerning the experience of Member States in that field. The question of assuring quality control must also be addressed.

36. On the subject of remote translation, the Advisory Committee reiterated its recommendation that the Secretary-General should consider a system-wide approach to the most efficient use of remote translation to reinforce capacity, as well as its opinion that further investments in that technology should be made and that its implications with respect to staff deployment should be analysed.

37. **Mr. Lemaire** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Norway, said that the European Union attached particular importance to the optimal use of conference services and facilities, the quality of which must be consistent with the high level of the Organization's work. It also attached great importance to strict compliance with meeting hours, the limit on the duration of meetings and the limitation on speaking time. Documents should be issued in accordance with the six-week rule and submitted in a timely manner by the originating departments. The Secretary-General should take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with those provisions. In addition, intergovernmental bodies should, when planning their meetings, take into account the arrangements concerning Orthodox Good Friday, as provided for in General Assembly resolutions 54/248 and 55/222.

38. The European Union was concerned about the persistence of excessive vacancy rates at certain duty stations and urged that measures be taken to remedy that situation, including the implementation of General Assembly resolution 55/258.

39. A major impetus was needed in the area of remote interpretation, which could provide an answer to the recurrent problem of the excessive travel costs of interpreters. The Secretary-General should continue his efforts in that direction and make systematic use of new technologies to assist interpreters in adapting to new working conditions. In particular, an exhaustive comparison should be made between the cost of remote interpretation and the cost of traditional interpretation methods. The European Union was surprised at the lack of information on the development of remote translation, videoconferencing and voice recognition systems, areas in which a major impetus was also needed. It welcomed, however, the successful implementation of the electronic documentation retrieval system. The Union also attached great importance to the development, updating and enhancing of United Nations web sites in several languages.

40. Lastly, the European Union wished to explore the possibiiity of restructuring the Committee's consideration of the current agenda item.

41. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the inclusion in the reports of the Secretary-General of meeting statistics for United Nations bodies and regional and other groupings, including statistics for meetings held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. He noted with satisfaction that the overall utilization factor of conference services in New York and at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna in 2000 had exceeded the 80 per cent benchmark.

42. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the establishment of the Division of Conference Services

and of a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi; it was the only United Nations centre in the developing world and should be accorded the same status as other United Nations centres elsewhere. Greater efforts should be made to increase the capacity and utilization of conference-servicing facilities at Nairobi and the remaining vacancies for the posts of interpreters should be filled expeditiously. The Group of 77 and China concurred with the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 50 to 53 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

43. The chronic problem of the late issuance of documentation was a cause of concern. Departments must comply with the 10-week rule for the submission of documents for processing so as to eliminate the negative impact of late submission on timely issuance. The Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services should also improve coordination with author departments with a view to identifying and resolving the constraints that gave rise to a low rate of compliance with the six-week rule. It was a matter of particular importance to small delegations, which needed ample time to consider reports. The Group of 77 and China endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 100 and 101 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

44. The level of resources that had been proposed for the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services for the biennium 2002-2003 was inadequate. The capacity of the Documents Control Section, in particular, needed to be strengthened to enable the Section to coordinate the processing of documents more effectively. In that connection, the Group of 77 and China noted with interest the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 93 and 94 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

45. While the Group of 77 and China agreed that priority should be accorded to meetings of the Charter and other mandated bodies, it wished to stress the importance of providing full conference services, in particular interpretation, to meetings of regional and other major groupings; such meetings were crucial to the smooth functioning of the Organization. To that end, further efforts should be made to increase the percentage of requests met for provision of interpretation services for meetings of regional and other groupings of Member States held in New York, including the implementation of some of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 86 and 87 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

46. **Mr. Jalang'o** (Kenya) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He welcomed the improved coordination of conference services at the various duty stations as demonstrated by the increased utilization of the conference centres in Addis Ababa and Bangkok. In that connection, his delegation supported the proposal for the conversion of one of the large conference rooms in Bangkok from its current fixed-seating layout into a multi-purpose room with a flexible seating arrangement in order to meet the needs of non-United Nations users and thus further enhance the utilization of the Bangkok centre. He called for the provision of the $273,000 necessary for such a modification.

47. His delegation endorsed the measures proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and issues relating to the recruitment of language staff (A/56/277). The introduction of streamlined procedures for the lateral transfer of language staff, together with in-house training, would help to address that problem. His delegation was particularly concerned about the high vacancy rates in the English and Arabic booths at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and wished to know how that situation currently stood.

48. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to increase the utilization of the conference facilities at Nairobi. The restructuring of the administration, the establishment of a new Division of Conference Services and the steps taken towards the creation of a permanent interpretation service at UNON were most welcome. There had already been an increase in the number of meetings held in Nairobi, confirming its potential as a venue for United Nations conferences and other intergovernmental meetings. He noted, in that connection, that UNON had successfully hosted the spring 2001 session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

49. Regrettably, major meetings of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) continued to be held outside Nairobi. His delegation supported the

recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should request UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements to comply with the headquarters rule and to hold all their meetings at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Persistent non-compliance with that rule was contrary to the spirit and purpose of resolutions 54/248, 54/249 and 55/222, in which the General Assembly had urged increased use of the conference facilities at Nairobi. In resolution 55/222, the Secretary-General had been requested to consider improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to accommodate adequately major meetings and conferences and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Committee on Conferences. He would like to know what the status of that report was. Lastly, he urged the Secretary-General and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to continue to explore all possible ways of increasing the use of the conference facilities in Nairobi and to bring them up to the level of those at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

50. **Mr. Kendall** (Argentina) said that he welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences to change the procedure regarding the participation of observers in its meetings, since the increased participation of observers would enrich the debates. He supported the Committee's recommendation that time limits should be instituted for the submission of documents by the Secretariat, as a means of ensuring that the best possible use was made of conference-servicing resources and facilities. He was pleased that the utilization factor for the United Nations Offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent; one way to achieve such improvement was to start meetings on time. The General Assembly should be kept informed of progress made in the area of coordination, particularly with respect to the servicing of meetings held away from established headquarters and technical advances.

51. He was concerned about the low rate of compliance with the six-week rule for the submission of documentation. That perennial problem could be solved through the establishment of a suitable accountability system. The Secretariat should provide the General Assembly with an analysis of the problem and possible solutions. With respect to remote interpretation, he supported the conclusions in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/188) and wondered whether that alternative was economically viable in the light of a comparative analysis of current communications costs. He was concerned about the continued high vacancy rates in language posts at some duty stations, which could be remedied only through the provision of adequate incentives for increased staff mobility. To ensure the availability of qualified language staff, the General Assembly should consider raising the ceiling on annual United Nations earnings for retirees. Lastly, he was concerned about the disparity between the information available on the United Nations web site in English and that available in the other official languages. That situation must be rectified to guarantee equal treatment of all six official languages of the United Nations.

52. **Ms. Sun** Minqin (China) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She noted with appreciation that the services provided by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services had contributed to the success of the recent special sessions of the General Assembly on children and on HIV/AIDS.

53. She expressed satisfaction that the 2000 utilization factor for the four main United Nations offices overall had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent and that the percentage of requests met for meetings with interpretation in New York by regional and other major groupings of Member States had risen from 84 per cent in the period 1999-2000 to 90 per cent in the period from July 2000 to June 2001. She was concerned, however, about the quality of interpretation and translation. Despite the efforts made by the Department, errors and omissions by translators and poor interpretation continued to hamper the work of delegations. There was a need for a comprehensive monitoring system to ensure that promotions were based on performance, and there must be zero tolerance for staff members who lacked responsibility or were indifferent about the quality of their work. Training programmes should be instituted for underperforming staff.

54. She was pleased to note that the Department intended to continue implementing cost-saving measures, including improved control of resources budgeted for temporary assistance for meetings. Although she understood the need to hire freelance

staff, she was concerned that some were not sufficiently familiar with the work of the United Nations, while others were simply not up to the job. Her delegation wished to have data on the number of freelance staff hired and on the cost-effectiveness of temporary assistance.

55. The principle of equal treatment of all six official languages must be implemented in earnest. She wished to know, in that connection, why the Publishing Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva employed editors for all the official languages except Chinese. Noting that the web sites in Arabic, Chinese and Russian had been maintained through the use of general temporary assistance funds, she asked whether the Secretariat had implemented the General Assembly's decision, in resolution 54/249, regarding the conversion of the related positions to established posts.

56. The conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi must have the same status as the other United Nations conference centres. She was pleased to note that those facilities were becoming an integral part of United Nations conference-servicing resources, and she trusted that the proposals of the Committee on Conferences for their further enhancement would be implemented.

57. **Mr. Laptenok** (Belarus) said that the reports before the Committee provided a clear picture of the situation with respect to the delivery of conference services, without which the General Assembly and other important intergovernmental bodies could not function. The related report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/475) contained many sound recommendations that would improve the work of the Secretariat in the areas under consideration and should be implemented in a timely fashion. The suggestions made during the Committee's consideration of the item should also be taken into account. The proposal mentioned by the representative of Kenya concerning the conversion of one of the large conference rooms at the United Nations conference centre in Bangkok from its current fixed-seating layout into a multi-purpose room with a flexible seating arrangement was of particular interest.

58. The time had come for the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to make greater use of such new technologies as videoconferencing and remote interpretation. The introduction of voice recognition software would expedite the preparation and issuance of documentation in all six official languages.

59. There was a need to address, as a matter of urgency, the excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations. The Advisory Committee had made a number of useful recommendations in that regard. It was not reasonable to criticize the work of the language services when everyone knew full well that they were understaffed.

60. In addition to providing information on the calendar of international conferences, which was easily accessible through the Internet, the United Nations Chronicle should report on the participation of Member States in those forums. He was convinced that such a shift in focus would win the Chronicle a wider readership. The use of external contractors to produce the Chronicle would be cost-effective and, he trusted, would facilitate its simultaneous publication in all six official languages. The Department must however ensure that the principle of equitable geographical representation was respected.

61. **Ms. Bentley-Anderson** (United States of America) said that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services had to perform a delicate balancing act in meeting the needs of Member States and discharging its mandate while remaining within its budget. In 2001, the Department had failed in that most fundamental task and was expected to exceed its budget by $8 million. The resources available to the Department had increased considerably, yet there continued to be chronic problems with the delivery of services which could not be addressed by simply providing more money.

62. Several factors had led to the overspending in 2001. The Department had had to service a number of special sessions. It had been able to accommodate the extra work, but at some cost to its other activities. She wondered whether so many special sessions were needed. The Department had also had to pay staff members overtime because meetings had not ended on schedule; those costs represented a significant proportion of the overexpenditure. In addition, the Department had had to engage expensive contract employees to supplement its own staff. Finally, there continued to be serious problems throughout the Secretariat with the timely submission of documents; that meant that the Department had been unable to produce documentation for meetings on time and, as a

result, some bodies had had to extend their sessions, incurring greater expenditure.

63. She welcomed the Department's proposals regarding the introduction of new techniques and changes in existing working methods in order to address the problems. The Committee should, in turn, support the Department's request for changes in the way delegations worked. She noted with satisfaction that the upgrading of the optical disk system would ensure equal access in all the official languages of the United Nations; that would greatly increase the amount of information available to delegations and, eventually, to the public. The Committee should make the relevant technology available to all current users immediately and at no cost. The use of technology, while not a panacea, could in many cases improve service delivery. The Department must therefore be given the freedom to explore technological solutions to its most difficult problems and to determine through testing whether new technology was suitable for use.

64. Her delegation could not support the level of resources proposed for the Department for the biennium 2002-2003. It believed that with discipline on the part of Member States and the introduction of the proposed changes in the Department's working methods, the Department could function effectively at the current level of funding.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/56/SR.17

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 25 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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01-60263 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 124: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/56/32, A/56/120/Rev.1, A/56/133, A/56/188, A/56/213 and Corr.1, A/56/261, A/56/277, A/56/293, A/56/299, A/56/300, A/56/339 and A/56/475; A/AC.198/2001/8)

1. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation) said that joint efforts must be made by the Secretariat and the Member States, on an agreed basis, to make the best possible use of conference-servicing resources. To that end, conference services must be coordinated among the various departments of the Organization and among the secretariats of United Nations bodies and other international organizations. The Committee on Conferences played a valuable role in that regard.

2. His delegation was prepared to approve the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003, taking into account the observations of the Committee on Conferences. He was pleased to note that the draft calendar reflected the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolutions 53/208 A, 54/248 and 55/222 concerning the observance of Orthodox Good Friday. He was also pleased that the 2000 utilization factor for the United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi overall had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent and that the factor for Nairobi had increased significantly. He hoped that the utilization factor for 2001 would show still greater improvement.

3. His delegation noted with satisfaction that, between July 2000 and June 2001, the percentage of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States which had been provided with interpretation services had risen to 90 per cent. Since the smooth functioning of sessional bodies was extremely important in order to enable the Organization to implement its programmes and mandates effectively, priority in the provision of conference services must be given to bodies established under the Charter or by mandate.

4. His delegation remained concerned about the late issuance of documentation. In some cases, the Fifth Committee had had to adjust its programme of work as a result of that chronic problem. He supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the Secretary-General should develop an effective accountability and responsibility system within the Secretariat to ensure the timely submission of documents for processing. Despite the established rules on the use of the official languages of the United Nations, the Member States did not always enjoy equal treatment in terms of the quality and quantity of translation and interpretation in those languages. His delegation would seek to ensure the adequate use of Russian and strict compliance with the principle of the parity of the six official languages. Effective action must be taken, particularly in the area of human resources, to improve translation and interpretation at the United Nations. His delegation had observations to make concerning the quality of translation into Russian and interpretation from Russian into English.

5. The Committee on Conferences had adopted a series of important recommendations concerning the recruitment of language staff. He reaffirmed his delegation's position that, without a radical change in the Organization's staffing policies, involving the establishment of a system of selection and rotation of staff that regularly brought in conscientious, well-qualified interpreters and translators conversant with contemporary language, the output of the interpretation and translation services would not improve. He agreed with the Committee on Conferences that a comprehensive review should be conducted of the norms and standards of productivity in the language services in the light of ongoing technological innovations in their work.

6. He welcomed the re-engineering of the optical disk system. It was important that users should be able to search for United Nations documents using any of the six official languages. However, he was seriously concerned about the widening disparity between English and the other official languages in the development and content of the United Nations web site. Unfortunately, the Secretariat had not made any serious efforts to develop proposals to redress that situation, as requested by the General Assembly. Practical measures were needed to address that violation of the principle of parity among the official languages of the United Nations.

7. With respect to the relevant section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, and in line with the relevant recommendations of the Committee on Conferences and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, he asked the Secretariat to provide information on the amount and distribution of temporary assistance in conference services, as well

as proposals on the conversion of some temporary assistance funds into established posts in the language services since that would lead to higher quality and budgetary savings. At the current session, the Fifth Committee should consider the possibility of strengthening the oversight and monitoring functions of the Committee on Conferences to enhance its effectiveness and strengthen its role as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly.

Other matters

8. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) proposed that, since the Committee had decided not to discuss the different sections of the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003 at its formal meetings, the Programme Planning and Budget Division should prepare a summary of the debates held in informal consultations so that delegations would have a record of the views expressed.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/56/SR.18

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 26 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Bhattarai (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Nepal)
later: Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Chairman) ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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01-60454 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana), Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal), Vice Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 124: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/56/32, A/56/120/Rev.1, A/56/133, A/56/188, A/56/213 and Corr.1, A/56/261, A/56/277, A/56/293, A/56/299, A/56/300, A/56/339 and A/56/475; A/AC.198/2001/8)

1. **Mr. Mumbey-Wafula** (Uganda) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Kenya. He attached great importance to the streamlining of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services with a view to enhancing service delivery. He noted with satisfaction that the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) had increased and that the 2000 utilization factor for the four main United Nations offices overall had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent. In that connection, his delegation supported the proposal for the reconfiguration of one of the large conference rooms at the United Nations conference centre in Bangkok, in order to maximize the use of the centre, and the provision of the $273,000 required for such a modification. He trusted that the efforts to increase the utilization of the conference facilities in Nairobi would be pursued and that the remaining vacancies in the Interpretation Section at UNON would be filled.

2. He expressed concern that the resources requested for the Department for the biennium 2002-2003 represented a net increase of only 2 per cent, at a time when the demand for conference services was increasing. He supported the strengthening of the Documents Control Section in order to enhance its coordination role and the processing of documentation. The late issuance of documents adversely affected the level of preparedness of delegations; there was thus a need for strict compliance with the six-week rule.

3. Like previous speakers on the item, he wished to underscore the need to adhere to the headquarters rule in order to increase the use of conference facilities at United Nations regional offices; to address the problem of excessive vacancy rates at some duty stations; and to accord equal treatment to all United Nations centres, irrespective of their location. His delegation would support every effort to that end.

4. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

5. His delegation commended the Committee on Conferences on its work and supported the recommendation in its report (A/56/32, para. 21) that the General Assembly should adopt the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003. His delegation also welcomed the fact that the rate of utilization of conference services had improved overall during 2000 and that the United Nations Office in Nairobi had achieved a 100 per cent utilization rate.

6. On the subject of translation, interpretation and documentation, his delegation supported the comments made in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Qatar addressed to the Secretary-General on behalf of the Arab Group (A/56/261). It also called for a reconsideration of the practice of interpretation on relay whereby statements in Arabic, for example, were interpreted into French and from French into English. His delegation had noticed that that practice adversely affected the quality of interpretation.

7. There appeared to have been an increase in the practice of self-revision in translation into Arabic. In that connection, his delegation emphasized the importance of ensuring that the use of self-revision did not impair the quality of translations and said that it was important for revisers to be highly experienced and well-trained.

8. He commended the optical disk system and called for it to be continuously developed in line with technological improvements. The system should be made available to outside users on a subscription basis.

9. His delegation wished to emphasize the importance of adhering to the six-week rule for the submission of documents, that would allow committees and other bodies ample time to study and discuss the content of those documents and reach informed decisions on them. In that connection, he agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, who had pointed out that the timely submission of documents was a shared responsibility between the Member States and the Secretariat.

10. In conclusion, his delegation drew attention to the importance of providing conference services for the regional groupings within the United Nations, the meetings of which he regarded as complementary to the official meetings of United Nations bodies. In that connection he welcomed the improvement in the provision of interpretation services to regional groupings.

11. **Mr. Senior** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Australia and New Zealand, said that conference services consumed a significant proportion of United Nations budgetary resources and were part of the Organization's basic machinery. It was important to have high-quality conference services in all six official languages. However, it was in the interests of delegations to ensure that spending reflected priorities and that the Organization's finite resources were used as efficiently as possible. The Department's reported overexpenditure of approximately $29 million was therefore disconcerting.

12. Translation was one area in which efficiency could be improved. Over the past 20 years, there had been quantum leaps in technology which had revolutionized work methods, yet there had not been significant gains in translation productivity over the same period; in fact, productivity had declined since the mid-1990s. That could not be attributed to staff cuts since the United Nations currently employed around 550 translators in New York and Geneva, only four fewer than 20 years earlier. He therefore welcomed the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should initiate a comprehensive review of the norms and standards of productivity in the language services. The experience of other organizations should be taken into account. In that connection, he noted that the workload standards of United Nations translators appeared to be 25 per cent lower than those of their Canadian counterparts.

13. Interpreters in Geneva were handling 23 per cent fewer assignments than they had 20 years earlier. Nevertheless, individually they were handling about 89 more assignments per year than interpreters in New York. That situation, which was surely not a failing of the interpreters themselves, suggested that the Organization was not making optimum use of their valuable skills.

14. He was concerned that productivity rates for typists did not reflect the gains that might have been expected with the introduction of new technologies and that outmoded working methods, such as the use of dictaphones, had not been abandoned in favour of new approaches. He would like to know whether more could be done to reduce the cost of producing summary records and verbatim records, which increased the hourly cost of United Nations meetings by up to 68 per cent.

15. He welcomed the successful efforts to increase the use of the conference facilities in Addis Ababa, Bangkok and Nairobi. It was to be hoped that those efforts would be pursued, since utilization rates could afford to climb further still. He supported the adoption of an integrated approach to the management of conference facilities that would fully incorporate the regional commissions.

16. The increase in the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional groupings of Member States was most welcome. The use of remote interpretation could in the future help to offset the peaks and valleys in the demand for interpretation services. He would therefore like to see further efforts to utilize remote interpretation, where practicable. He would also welcome efforts to share the workload and facilities with other organizations, including specialized agencies. The International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal, for example, was situated in the same time zone as New York and had excellent conference facilities and interpreters for all six official languages.

17. The Department was to be commended for its successful efforts to synchronize the release of documentation. He also welcomed the re-engineering of the optical disk system (ODS) and the multilingual functionality of the new ODS. He was pleased to note that those innovations had been facilitated by the redeployment of resources as a result of the automation of other tasks. Since the United Nations web site also provided access to documents, he would like an assurance that there was no duplication of effort in that area.

18. It was regrettable that both the report of the Secretary-General on the availability of documentation for the proper functioning of intergovernmental bodies (A/56/299) and the report of the Secretary-General on submission of documentation consistent with the six-week rule (A/56/300) had themselves been late. Wider use of document planning sessions and better

coordination between author departments and processing units would no doubt bring improvements in the timely issuance of documentation, but Member States must also shoulder some of the burden: there was a need to review meeting schedules, limit requests for documentation and revise the frequency with which agenda items were discussed and their associated documents produced. In that connection, he would strongly support the biennialization of the item under consideration.

19. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

20. His delegation attached great importance to the multilingual character of the United Nations and considered the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/56/32) to be a good basis for further work.

21. He expressed concern about the high vacancy rate at many duty stations, in particular the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and pointed out, in that connection, that the problem could not be solved through redeploying staff or ensuring their mobility because all duty stations were facing the same problem of vacant posts.

22. He drew attention to the need for official confirmation from the Secretariat concerning its compliance with the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolution 53/208 A, paragraph 10, concerning the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha in the United Nations system as a whole.

23. The recommendations of the Committee on Conferences concerning the late issuance of documents were very welcome; his delegation hoped that they would help to resolve that problem.

24. His delegation welcomed the conclusions of the Committee on Conferences relating to remote interpretation. It considered that remote interpretation should be used within strict limits once its value had been demonstrated and that it should only be used for international conferences after the General Assembly had adopted a resolution to that effect.

25. He was concerned at the increasing disparity between the use of the six official languages of the United Nations on the Organization's web site and agreed with the statement in the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/AC.198/2001/8) that further development of the web site in the six official languages would require additional allocations.

26. Despite the improvement in the provision of conference services to regional and other groupings, his delegation wished to place on record its concern at the continuance of the Secretariat's incorrect reading of resolution 54/248 B, paragraph 11, the provisions of which had been confirmed by resolution 55/222. In that connection, he emphasized the need to ensure interpretation services for all meetings of regional and other groupings of Member States.

27. Vacant language posts at the United Nations Office at Nairobi should be filled without delay and adequate funding should be ensured for other duty stations, in particular the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was in obvious financial difficulty.

28. He welcomed the statement in paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of recommendations regarding the United Nations Chronicle (A/56/339) that the Department of Public Information would endeavour to see how the United Nations Chronicle could be published in six languages as efficiently and effectively as possible so that the expectations of Member States could be fulfilled.

29. His delegation also welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences concerning the participation of observers in its work, but pointed out that conditions for the participation of observers need to be further improved.

30. His delegation endorsed in its entirety the annex to document A/56/261 concerning the views of the Arab Group on the provision of language services and considered that all the points raised in the document should be addressed. In particular, he said that all ESCWA documents should be translated into Arabic, that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/222, section III, paragraph 5, documents should not be made available on the United Nations web site before they were issued in traditional form in accordance with the six-week rule, and that there should be a return to the practice of issuing all United Nations documents and supplements in the six official languages. His delegation was concerned that the Secretariat had ceased its practice of issuing all documents of the main deliberative organs of the United Nations in the six official languages and called for the former practice to be restored. The Secretariat should respect the provisions of rules 78 and 120 of the

rules of procedure of the General Assembly which specified clearly that no resolution or decision should be adopted unless it had been circulated to delegations in the six official languages 24 hours previously. There was also a need to comply with rule 54 of the rules of procedure, which required verbatim and summary records to be drawn up as soon as possible in the languages of the General Assembly. His delegation pointed out in that connection that there had been considerable delay in the issuance of summary records during the previous session of the Assembly. He also drew attention to the failure to comply with rule 59, which specified that resolutions adopted by the General Assembly should be communicated to Members of the Organization within 15 days after the close of the session. Lastly, the posts of revisers in the translation services should be retained. The collections of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library should be enriched by the addition of more reference works in the Arabic language and Arabic language specialists should be appointed to work in the Library services.

31. *Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana) took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted with satisfaction that the 2000 utilization factor for the four main United Nations offices overall and for the majority of the bodies in the sample reviewed by the Committee on Conferences had exceeded 80 per cent of available conference-servicing resources. The Secretariat was to be commended on its efforts in that regard. While those efforts must continue, there was a need to ensure that the smooth functioning of intergovernmental bodies was not adversely affected. His delegation had taken note of the assurance given by the Under-Secretary-General in his introductory statement that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would take into account the needs of small and medium-sized delegations, whose members often had to carry out several tasks and assume several responsibilities simultaneously. The increase in the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional groupings of Member States was also welcome.

33. The creation of a new Division of Conference Services and a permanent interpretation service at UNON had been of great benefit to non-English-speaking delegations in Nairobi. He was concerned, however, that, at the date of issuance of the relevant report, high vacancy rates had persisted in the Arabic and English booths at UNON. He would like to know how the situation currently stood and what corrective measures had been taken.

34. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should request the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to comply with the headquarters rule and to hold all their meetings at UNON, in order to increase further the utilization of the conference facilities in Nairobi. It also endorsed the recommendation that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) should continue their efforts to improve further the utilization of their conference centres.

35. His delegation was concerned about the late issuance of documentation, which was a persistent and serious problem. It attached great importance to compliance by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services with the six-week rule, urged author departments to respect the 10-week rule and called for improved coordination in order to address the situation.

36. He welcomed the decrease in the overall vacancy rate for language services, but was concerned about the persistence of excessive vacancy rates at some duty stations, particularly UNON and the United Nations Office at Vienna. He therefore supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that priority should be given in recruitment to filling the vacancies at those Offices. He shared the concern of the Committee on Conferences that several candidates successful in competitive language examinations had refused offers of employment made by the Organization. There was a need to reflect on the causes of that situation and on ways of addressing it. The in-house training programme for interpreters might be one solution.

37. **Mr. Chen** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) expressed appreciation to delegations for the serious consideration they had given to the item and the issues they had raised for consideration and action by the Department. He was committed to ensuring that the

Department continued to serve the United Nations and Member States with maximum cost effectiveness.

38. Regarding the vacancy situation in the Arabic booth of the Interpretation Section at UNON, he said that priority had been given to filling those vacancies when offers of employment had been made to candidates who had passed the competitive examination for Arabic interpreters held in January 2001. Regrettably, all candidates had rejected the offers. In the immediate future, Arabic interpretation would continue to be provided through the recruitment of freelance staff, but the Department would continue to seek to fill the vacancies. He drew attention, in that connection, to paragraph 9 of the report of the Secretary-General on excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and issues relating to the recruitment of language staff (A/56/277), which described the extensive efforts made to fill those vacancies over the past year and a half. As to the English booth at UNON, its full contingent of three interpreters would be in place by early 2002: two candidates who had passed the competitive examination for English interpreters held in January 2001 had accepted career appointments at UNON beginning in December 2001 and January 2002, while a third interpreter from the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) had been given a one-year assignment to Nairobi starting in February 2002.

39. With respect to the status of the report requested by the General Assembly in resolution 55/222, section II, paragraph 15, he said that an evaluation of the existing conference facilities at UNON was being carried out in the context of an overall review of the needs of and facilities at UNON and other agencies in Nairobi. The review would take into account the experience gained as a result of the establishment of a permanent interpretation service in Nairobi and the other recent developments referred to in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/56/133). The report requested by the Assembly was expected to be submitted to the Fifth Committee in early 2002.

40. The quality of interpretation and translation had always been a priority of his Department. All language staff were recruited through rigorous competitive examinations and their performance was closely monitored throughout their careers. External studies programmes were available to both translators and interpreters. Translators received intensive in-house training after recruitment and special coaching before they became self-revisers. The work of revisers and self-revisers was monitored through quality control mechanisms, which also ensured the quality of translations of particularly important or sensitive documents. Interpreters took part in in-house training workshops when time and resources permitted. Occasional lapses in quality were usually due to highly technical subject matter, time constraints or human error. Specific complaints from delegations were always addressed immediately and discussed with the staff concerned.

41. The number and cost of freelance staff in the language services varied from year to year depending on the additional capacity needed at any given time. One advantage of freelance staff was that they could be recruited in a targeted fashion for specific periods. In 2000, 143 freelance interpreters had been recruited. The standard yearly cost of a staff interpreter ranged from $134,600 at the P-3 level to $192,100 at the P-5 level, while the yearly cost of continuous employment of a freelance interpreter ranged from $95,000 to $143,000 for locally recruited staff and from $155,000 to $203,000 for non-locally recruited staff.

42. The lack of a Chinese editor in the Publishing Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva was a genuine problem that had been addressed thus far through temporary assistance or assistance from the Chinese Section of the Office's Language Service. The Department would find a more durable solution in the coming biennium through redeployment.

43. Resources for temporary assistance for meetings were managed at the departmental level and allocated as needed. For example, in 2000, the amounts allocated for temporary assistance in the translation services had been $398,000 for the Arabic Service, $259,000 for the Chinese Service, $887,000 for the English Service, $607,000 for the French Service, $453,000 for the Russian Service and $595,000 for the Spanish Service. There was no fixed distribution formula, and the amounts allocated varied from year to year. That flexibility enabled the Department to respond to adjustments in the calendar of meetings.

44. The Secretariat scheduled United Nations conferences and meetings in full compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/208 A on the designation of two Muslim holidays as official holidays of the Organization. In addition, all official documents were issued simultaneously in the six

official languages, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 55/222. He had taken note of the comments and concerns of members with respect to matters such as the timely issuance of documentation, the servicing of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, the limitation of meeting duration, workload standards, the need for further technological innovation and the improvement of cost-effectiveness in conference services. Further details on those and other issues would be provided in the informal consultations.

Other matters

45. **The Chairman** recalled that, at the Committee's preceding meeting, the representative of Egypt had made a proposal intended to address the concerns of some delegations regarding the fact that the Committee had not held a general discussion on the different sections of the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003 at its formal meetings. The Bureau's view was that, since no objection had been raised when the Chairman had declared the general debate on the agenda item concluded, it would not be possible to reopen it to allow for the discussion of the proposed programme budget section by section. In response to the proposal put forward by the representative of Egypt, the Bureau had decided that, following the conclusion of the Committee's discussion of each part of the proposed programme budget in the informal consultations, a summary of the issues and concerns raised would be prepared by the Secretariat for reference purposes only. Those summaries would not be subject to discussion in the informal consultations.

46. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group would have liked to continue the Committee's previous practice of holding a general discussion on the proposed programme budget, followed by a section-by-section discussion, at its formal meetings; that practice had ensured transparency and had enabled delegations to place their views on record. At the current session, an acceptable solution might be to have a summary prepared of the discussions held on the different budget sections in the informal consultations and to request the heads of the departments and offices concerned to be present at those consultations during the discussions on the relevant sections. In the past, heads of departments and offices had been available to provide clarifications during the Committee's informal consultations.

47. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, regrettably, the creative approach suggested by the Bureau deviated from the Committee's established procedures. For example, the introductory statement by the Secretary-General did not normally constitute an introduction to all the sections of the proposed programme budget. The head of each department or office should introduce the relevant budget section and explain the budgetary requirements in detail, as in the past. The Group of 77 and China had made its proposal on the understanding that the discussion of the individual budget sections in informal consultations was an exceptional practice. There was no reason why the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) should have greater privileges than the Fifth Committee, yet the former had benefited from the presence of the heads of departments and offices to introduce and explain the relevant budget sections. The Fifth Committee should either proceed as proposed by the Group of 77 and China or have the heads of the departments and offices concerned introduce each section of the proposed programme budget at formal meetings, without holding a general debate.

48. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he had full confidence in the leadership of the Chairman and the Fifth Committee secretariat. The pressure under which the Committee was currently operating was explained in part by the exceptional and tragic circumstances in which the current session was taking place, which had necessitated major changes in the programme of work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. He would like to know the cost, in terms of both human and financial resources, of the preparation of summaries of the informal consultations on each budget section. He also asked for clarification of the procedures and legal issues concerning the invitation of department heads to introduce the relevant budget sections in the informal consultations.

49. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that he, too, would like information on the financial and legal implications of the proposal under consideration. In the past, the Secretary-General had usually been represented at the Committee's meetings by officials from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. At the current session, the Secretary-General had made an introductory statement covering all sections of the

proposed programme budget and had heard the statements made on behalf of the regional groups. His delegation did not wish to question how the Secretary-General chose to introduce the budget document.

50. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that he shared the views expressed by the representatives of Belgium and Canada. The Bureau's suggestion would enable all Member States to engage fully in the discussions on the proposed programme budget and to have their questions answered. The Secretary-General had acted in accordance with previous practice in introducing the budget document and all delegations had had an opportunity to raise questions in that regard.

51. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) said that it had become standard practice for the Committee to call on any programme managers or heads of departments to reply to questions posed by members about the work of their units. He was somewhat surprised that some Committee members now considered that responsibility for explaining the entire programme budget could be assigned to just one or two persons speaking on behalf of the entire Secretariat.

52. It was not constructive to raise the issue of the estimated cost of the production of short summaries of informal consultations. If the Committee wished to find out about past practices, it would be easy enough to consult the official summary records of the sessions in question to ascertain what procedures had been used during the adoption of the programme budget. However, in the present exceptional circumstances, it would be most useful to follow the procedure proposed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

53. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said it was his recollection that the various directors had each presented to the Committee their own parts of the programme budget at formal meetings when the Committee had considered the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. The fact that those sections had each been prepared as fascicles emphasized the importance of having each director present when the Committee took up the corresponding section.

54. While the General Assembly was indeed meeting in exceptional circumstances, that did not mean that there were such direct repercussions on the work of the Fifth Committee that it should change its practices. It would be unwise to adopt a budget without having the necessary information. In his view, the proposal put forward by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran was worthy of support. The programme budget should be considered in informal consultations, in the presence of the corresponding directors or heads of departments and a representative of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), and summary records should be prepared. Alternatively, each programme would have to be introduced officially.

55. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation, like those of Canada, the European Union and the United States, believed that the Secretary-General had introduced the entire programme budget when he had appeared before the Fifth Committee, not just the foreword or introduction. He expressed doubt as to the advisability, procedural acceptability and cost of having informal consultations covered by summary records, even on an exceptional basis, and expressed support for the procedures adopted by the Chairman and the Bureau for the adoption of the programme budget.

56. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) assured the Committee that the Secretary-General understood the importance of ensuring that heads of departments and directors of programmes took part in the budget process. Every effort was made to ensure that they were present during the deliberations of the Advisory Committee and CPC, the reports of which were submitted to the Fifth Committee. For as long as he could remember, the Secretary-General had been the one to introduce the programme budget as a whole formally to the Fifth Committee, which then deliberated on a section-by-section basis. The introductions by the directors had been limited to question and answer sessions during the informal consultations, and were given only as needed and when such directors were invited by the Committee. In any event, the Secretary-General reserved the right to designate his representatives at any meetings on agenda items.

57. As for the cost of issuing summaries of informal consultations, there were two possible scenarios. The first would involve the production by the Secretariat of an unofficial summary at the end of the informal consultations, and could be implemented without any direct additional costs, since the Secretariat in any event kept notes of the informal consultations in the course of its work. On the other hand, the production of official summary records would be costly, as it would be necessary to engage précis-writers and translators. It

would also undermine the informal nature of the consultations.

58. **Mr. Albrecht** (South Africa) said that it was part of his responsibility, as his Government's representative in the Fifth Committee, to report faithfully on both the formal and the informal proceedings. He did not consider it useful to request that further official records should be produced by the Secretariat. The Secretariat had been very forthcoming in providing information to the Committee and in ensuring access to directors and heads of departments when so requested. It was indeed an exceptional year, and the Committee must work under extra time constraints because of the imminent arrival of Heads of State and Government. The Committee's priority must be to conclude the budget discussions as quickly as possible.

59. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation's request that programme directors and heads of departments should attend the Committee's deliberations should in no way be interpreted as an attempt to minimize the role of the Secretary-General in introducing the programme budget.

60. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should continue with the informal consultations on the understanding that representatives from the various departments would be present during the appropriate discussions. Brief unofficial summaries of the issues and concerns raised would be drawn up by the Secretariat following the discussion of each part of the budget.

61. *It was so decided.*

62. **The Chairman** said that he had received communications from the President of the United Nations Staff Union and the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) requesting access to address the Fifth Committee under agenda items 126 (Human resources management) and 127 (United Nations common system). He took it that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and in keeping with the Committee's practice at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Committee wished to invite those staff representatives to make oral statements in connection with agenda items 126 and 127.

63. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/56/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 2001

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 29 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Organization of work

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01-60707 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (A/56/478; A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/56/478), said that the General Assembly had already appropriated $73.6 million for the support account for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002. The additional estimate, for the implementation of the Panel's recommendations, was $25.8 million, of which $2.7 million was for the regular budget. The biennial full cost for the regular budget was $3.7 million and the annual full cost for the support account was $33.5 million. Total annual full support expenditure was therefore $107.1 million. Excluding regular budget and field support, the latter amount was approximately 3.6 per cent of the projected level of peacekeeping expenditure. The Secretary-General requested a total of 216 posts, of which nine were under the regular budget. Those resources did not include estimates for the strategic reserve to build a rapid deployment capacity. A report would be submitted after the Secretary-General had completed the consultations requested by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

2. The Advisory Committee recommended $1.6 million for the regular budget and $16.2 million for the support account. It further recommended 7 posts under the regular budget and 122 under the support account, of which 92 were for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Advisory Committee's recommendations were based on the principle that support resources were primarily to establish additional capacity at Headquarters to manage peacekeeping operations in the field. That capacity and the level of resources and related posts must be regularly reviewed to justify the continuing need for them. To that end, the Advisory Committee had made a number of observations and recommendations on the need to refine the method for establishing support estimates. Many of the Advisory Committee's comments would also apply when regular budget estimates were being prepared.

3. The Advisory Committee had recognized the need to strengthen the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with temporary staff capacity to manage the reform process. With respect to other departments, it had taken account of the staff and non-staff resources already available and had recommended regular budget staff resources for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Advisory Committee had regularly supported requests for human rights staff and non-staff resources in peacekeeping budgets. For the period ending 30 June 2002, a total of 190 posts were available from assessed and extrabudgetary sources for human rights activities in field missions.

4. The Advisory Committee had also recommended a strengthening of the investigation and resident audit services of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and had stressed the need to ensure that all available posts for resident auditors were filled expeditiously. It had requested the United Nations Board of Auditors to evaluate the resident audit service and was awaiting the findings. In the meantime, the Advisory Committee wished to draw attention to its comments in paragraph 94 of its report (A/56/478) concerning the handling of resident audit reports and the evaluation of the performance of resident auditors.

5. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), introducing the statement submitted by the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23 (A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1), said that the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the way in which the Organization planned, deployed, conducted and supported peacekeeping operations contained in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/977), pointed to the need to strengthen significantly a number of core capabilities. The review also contained an assessment of the implications for the Organization of developing the ability to deploy peacekeeping operations fully and effectively within 30 to 90 days of a Security Council resolution and presented an outline of a global strategy

for civilian staffing of peacekeeping operations to address critical shortcomings in the current system. It pointed out that in order to strengthen the core capacities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and to meet the challenges of rapid and effective deployment, adjustments would be required in the Department's organizational structure and staffing levels. It underlined the need to strengthen the capacities of the Department of Management, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The needs identified during the comprehensive review and the proposals and recommendations approved by the Fourth Committee in respect of the areas to be strengthened within the Secretariat would require the reorganization of current structures, the creation of new entities and the strengthening of existing ones, changes that would also require additional resources under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the six-month period from 1 January to 30 June 2000 and under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002 -2003.

6. With regard to the restructuring and strengthening of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the structure of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General would be adjusted to reflect the addition of the position of Director of Management, who would be responsible for overseeing the overhaul and strengthening of the Department's management system and procedures and for directing the work of the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit. The latter Unit was intended to be at the heart of an enhanced system by which the Organization learnt from its peacekeeping experience and developed policies, procedures and related operational tools for incorporation into the planning and conduct of ongoing and future missions. The Mine Action Service would be upgraded to Division status and would report directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The Office of Logistics, Management and Mine Action would be renamed the Office of Mission Support and the current Field Administration and Logistics Division would be divided into two separate Divisions, the Administrative Support Division and the Logistics Support Division. For its part, the Personnel Management and Support Service was to be significantly restructured and the former Logistics and Communications Service would become the Logistics Support Division. The current five sections within the former Logistics and Communications Service would be upgraded to the status of a Service in the new Logistics Support Division. Lastly, the Civilian Police Division would include a new Unit to provide advice on criminal law and judicial issues. Additional resources for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations financed from the support account for the financial period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 were estimated at $15,034,700, including 129 posts.

7. The main findings of the comprehensive review confirmed that, in the absence of an effective secretariat, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security could not function as an instrument of policy development, decision-making and management. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had acknowledged the need and had recommended that the Secretary-General should consider the establishment of a small support secretariat to service the Executive Committee. Three posts were suggested for that secretariat.

8. To date, the Department of Management had not been provided with additional resources to absorb the additional workload created by the surge in peacekeeping operations since mid-1999. The Department would therefore need strengthening to enable it to provide effective Headquarters support in a number of areas for the current level of peacekeeping. The Treasury had not been able to introduce safer payment mechanisms in peacekeeping missions, while the Contributions Service needed to be strengthened in order to improve the timeliness of assessment letters and the processing of receipts, which was particularly labour-intensive for peacekeeping missions with multiple mandate periods. With the establishment of new and more complex peacekeeping operations and the concomitant liquidation of other missions, the Accounts Division had had to focus on coping with the volume of accounting transactions in the most urgent and critical areas, thereby creating backlogs in other areas. It was proposed that the Peacekeeping Financing Division should be strengthened to enable it to meet increased workload demands.

9. In the area of human resources management, it was proposed that the Rules and Regulations Unit, the Operational Services Division and the Specialist Services Division should be strengthened. Additional resources were also proposed for the Medical Services Division to enable it to provide health services for staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters or en route to peacekeeping missions. Since 1993, no additional resources had been approved

for the Division from the support account. Resources were also required to meet security training needs prior to the deployment of security officers. In addition, staffing and other resources in the areas of information technology and procurement services had been inadequate to handle the increased workload and would be strengthened. Additional resources for the Department of Management as a whole were estimated at $6.7 million, including 61 new posts.

10. In order to enable the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide adequate support to the broader United Nations human rights programme, it was necessary to strengthen its capacity for backstopping the increasing number of peacekeeping operations with human rights components. Resources proposed for the support account were estimated at $949,000, including nine posts, while additional resources proposed for the Office for the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 were estimated at $1,890,300 net, including six posts.

11. The Office of Internal Oversight Services required strengthening at Headquarters to enable it to analyse management control systems and administrative procedures more comprehensively, respond to internal management consultancy requests from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and improve the quality and coverage of internal oversight services for peacekeeping operations. Additional resources proposed for the support account for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 were estimated at $279,500, including four new posts.

12. For its part, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator lacked the staff to participate fully in the mission planning process or to address the entire spectrum of peacekeeping security implications and requirements. Consequently, the additional resources proposed for the support account for the financial period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 were estimated at $191,500, including the establishment of four new posts.

13. The overall resources proposed therefore consisted of $2.7 million of the regular budget for the biennium 2002-2003 and $23.1 million for the support account for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2002. An additional 216 posts had been identified, of which 9 related to the regular budget and 207 to the support account.

14. **Mr. De Ruyt** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey, said that peacekeeping was a core function of the United Nations, and the European Union's large share of the financing of peacekeeping operations and its contribution to the training of peacekeeping personnel were a further testament to its unwavering commitment to that cause.

15. Peacekeeping was a global effort and the Organization's structure and staffing must be enhanced to enable it to perform its crucial and multifaceted task. At the same time, however, the Organization's support for conflict resolution was but one of its many tasks. United Nations action to foster development was another complementary priority and the implementation of the recommendations that had been made following the comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects and the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/502) were in no way a substitute for efforts to assist development.

16. The European Union concurred with the Secretary-General that additional resources and better use of existing resources were needed to improve the functioning of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In that connection, the work done by the General Assembly the previous year to address the most urgent of the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations was an important step in the right direction. The European Union supported the concept of a strategic reserve at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi as a significant element in enhancing the Organization's ability to discharge its peacekeeping responsibilities, and requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals for the required resources as early as possible.

17. The European Union nevertheless remained particularly attached to such important issues as the need for enhanced coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other departments, gender mainstreaming, human rights, international humanitarian law and the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit. The Fifth Committee's budgetary decisions should reflect the political consensus reached in the Fourth Committee. The Union noted with great interest the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee. Indeed, it appreciated the budgetary rigour shown by the Advisory Committee and its efforts to formulate

recommendations aimed at facilitating negotiations in the Fifth Committee.

18. **Mr. Dauth** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the steps that had been taken to date to reform peacekeeping operations had been historic ones. Member States had broadly supported the practical recommendations made by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations by approving emergency resources for those areas of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations that were most urgently in need of additional posts. The comprehensive managerial review that had followed had identified a number of core capabilities that needed strengthening, including management practices, planning and policy-making, internal coordination, rapid deployment and mission support. It was now for the Assembly to provide the resources required to implement those conclusions and the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, in accordance with the implementation plan proposed by the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee had recommended approval of 129 of the 216 posts that had been requested by the Secretary-General. While the delegations on whose behalf he spoke welcomed the Advisory Committee's rigour, they believed that a somewhat higher level than 129 was warranted and that the final number agreed upon should be filled expeditiously.

19. The Advisory Committee's emphasis on the need to improve the presentation of support account resource requests was heartening and consistent with the view that the Organization must become more focused on performance and results.

20. There were six issues of particular concern. First, the resources that had been requested by the Secretary-General and recommended by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations for the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit should be approved. Second, the elaboration of United Nations guidelines in such sectors as the judiciary, corrections and interim criminal procedures should be completed. Third, resources should be approved to provide gender expertise in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to translate the gender mainstreaming mandate into practice. Fourth, there was a need for resources at Headquarters to coordinate and support the work of the human rights components of peacekeeping operations. Fifth, special attention should be paid to the issue of integration between information technology developments in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Secretariat as a whole; before additional resources were committed to information technology, assurances were needed that the commitments were taking place within a well-thought-out strategic framework. Lastly, the impact on the Department's operational effectiveness of the scattering of the staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations over a number of different physical locations was a matter of concern. The Department's personnel currently operated from five different buildings and on six different floors within the Secretariat building alone. Those conditions exacerbated the lack of cohesiveness, poor internal coordination and ineffective management that had been highlighted in the comprehensive review. The Secretariat should therefore pursue options for addressing the problem.

Organization of work

21. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) recalled that it had been agreed in the informal consultations the previous week that the Committee should resume the informal consultations during the current week by first completing consideration of issues related to General Assembly affairs and conference services. In keeping with the understanding reached, discussion of pending issues should therefore be completed before consideration of part II of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 was taken up.

22. **Mr. Ramos** (Portugal), speaking as Coordinator of the informal consultations on agenda item 123, said that it was his clear recollection that participants in the informal consultations had agreed to resume their consultations during the current week by taking up part II of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, on the understanding that members could revert to any outstanding issues under part I.

23. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it would not be possible for his delegation in the future to move on to other parts of the proposed programme budget until all queries under the current part had been cleared up. Moreover, written replies to questions should not take the place of open debates in which all delegations were free to participate.

24. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the Committee should discourage the practice of negotiating in formal meeting the procedures governing informal

consultations. A great deal of work remained to be done and progress should not be held up until answers to queries were received from the Secretariat.

25. **The Chairman** said that, even though the Committee operated by consensus, he hoped that a spirit of pragmatism would prevail so that the work of the Committee could go forward.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/56/SR.20

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 30 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (continued)

Agenda item 126: Human resources management

Consultants

Delegation of authority

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01-61015 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (continued) (A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1 and A/56/478)

1. **Mr. Lee** Ho-jin (Republic of Korea) said that the maintenance of international peace and security was one of the primary purposes of the United Nations. Experience had shown that peacekeeping was an indispensable instrument of the Organization. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had presented the results of its comprehensive review and had enumerated the resource requirements that they would entail. His delegation welcomed the Special Committee's proposals and urged that action should be taken on them quickly. He wished to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's commitment to continue to participate in peacekeeping operations.

2. Turning to the budgetary implications, he associated his delegation with the request made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) that the support account should be presented in conformity with General Assembly resolution 55/231 on results-based budgeting. The increase in resources for peacekeeping operations must not compromise their efficiency. The current exercise was part of an ongoing reform process and should not be seen as an opportunity to request resources that were not clearly related to peacekeeping needs. The Advisory Committee was to be commended for the budgetary discipline it had shown.

3. Better coordination and an improved division of labour were needed between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other departments and also between Headquarters and field operations, and greater accountability was required. His delegation was deeply concerned about the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel involved in peacekeeping operations and believed that the matter should be considered in the context of the Secretary-General's related report. The resident audit service for peacekeeping operations should be strengthened. Such services had been effective in providing adequate internal audit coverage and in deterring mismanagement, waste, abuse and fraud in peacekeeping missions. More than 80 per cent of the over 1,500 recommendations resulting from the activities of 15 resident auditors between 1994 and 1999 had been implemented. Those recommendations had related to the recovery of fraud-related and other overpayments of $9.5 million and savings or income-enhancement measures amounting to an additional $9.3 million. Finally, he shared the view that the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be evaluated after a certain period of time.

Agenda item 126: Human resources management

Consultants (A/55/59 and Add.1, A/55/321, A/55/451; A/56/7 and A/56/16)

Delegation of authority (A/55/857 and Add.1; A/56/7)

4. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and other reports on the delegation of authority had been considered by the Fifth Committee at the previous session, and that the General Assembly had endorsed the Unit's recommendations in decision 55/481 of 1 June 2001. The General Assembly had also expressed its desire to discuss the issue in the light of the opinion of the Advisory Committee. The Fifth Committee could therefore avoid a substantive debate on the question by suggesting that the Secretary-General, when implementing the Unit's recommendations, should take into consideration the comments of the Advisory Committee. Since the JIU report on consultants had been discussed in the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), the Fifth Committee could also avoid a substantive debate on that subject simply by endorsing the recommendation of CPC and calling on the Secretary-General to take into account the corresponding observations of the Advisory Committee.

5. **Mr. Ronse** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia

Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey and, in addition, Norway, said that it was premature to embark on a discussion on human resources management without all the necessary documents.

6. Concerning the delegation of authority and the JIU report thereon, the European Union was concerned about the comments and recommendations formulated in respect of the Office of Human Resources Management by ACABQ in its report (A/56/7). The Secretary-General had been asked to report to the fifty-seventh session on measures to improve "responsibility in the reform of human resources management as well as the monitoring and control mechanisms and procedures" (A/55/258). A short-term solution must be found to the problem of the delegation of authority. Concrete results must therefore be achieved at the fifty-seventh session.

7. His delegation believed that the use of retirees should be discussed in the context of the examination of the overall report on staff policy which the Secretary-General was due to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. In addition, the Committee would require the additional information which the Secretariat had promised for 2002 in order to discuss the sensitive but essential question of salary ceilings.

8. Concerning the principle of geographical balance in the hiring of consultants, the choice of consultants must be consistent with the existing rules and regulations of the United Nations system. The criterion must therefore be the highest quality of service at the lowest cost, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 55/232 and 55/247.

9. The European Union endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding the establishment of an inventory of skills available in the Secretariat and the need for budget documents to give more precise information on requirements for consultants and justification for the use of outside expertise. Unfortunately, there was no satisfactory system for the comprehensive management of information on consultants. In view of the workload of the current session, the European Union was prepared to join in a consensus to postpone consideration of the issue.

10. The European Union had also duly noted the changes that the Secretary-General intended to make to the Staff Rules.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/56/SR.21

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 31 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Agenda item 126: Human resources management (*continued*)

Consultants (*continued*)

Delegation of authority (*continued*)

Organization of work

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01-61318 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*) (A/56/478; A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while adequate support must be provided for peacekeeping activities, all priority activities of the United Nations, particularly in the area of development, should be given sufficient resources. He agreed with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) that the statement on the programme budget implications of the comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations (A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1) should have sought to justify the totality of the request for resources and not just additional requests for posts and non-staff costs, and that the Secretariat should rethink the way it justified resource requests for the support account when the results-based budgeting techniques were used in the next budget submission (A/56/478, paras. 10 and 14).

2. Support-account resources, which were intended to fund backstopping support at Headquarters for peacekeeping operations in the field, should be used only for that purpose and not for activities that came under the programme of work of Secretariat departments that were not directly linked to peacekeeping operations. The number of associated posts must be reviewed regularly to justify the continuing need for them, and the support account should not be used as an opportunity to request resources that were not clearly and specifically related to increased peacekeeping needs.

3. The creation of small units in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to carry out functions for which other departments were primarily responsible must be avoided. In that connection, he shared the Advisory Committee's view that a dedicated public information unit on peacekeeping should be established not within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but within the Department of Public Information (A/56/478, para. 32). Likewise, the potential for duplication of work between political officers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and those in the Department of Political Affairs should be eliminated. There was a need to clarify the relationships between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and offices in the Department of Management that dealt with personnel, financial administration and control, procurement management and monitoring of delegated authority. Adequate resources should be provided for claims processing, and the proposed restructuring of the Field Administration and Logistics Division should expedite the settlement of outstanding uncertified claims.

4. He shared the Advisory Committee's view on the proposed reclassifications (A/56/478, para. 15). Out of the 93 posts approved by the General Assembly in resolution 55/238, only 89 had been filled and staff for only 44 had reported for duty. Greater efforts should be made to recruit staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on as wide a geographical basis as possible, taking into account the need for representation of troop-contributing countries in that Department. He welcomed the emphasis on training, planning and the establishment of rosters to improve personnel management in that Department and in the Office of Human Resources Management. Information technology should be used to reduce the recruitment period to less than 180 days. The implementation of the outcome of the negotiations on the Secretary-General's proposals should be kept under review, taking into account the methodological aspects of results-based budgeting and the need to ensure the efficient and effective use of United Nations resources.

5. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) said that the Organization's peacekeeping operations were of the greatest importance and his Government was sparing no efforts to make Egyptian troops available to participate in them.

6. The administrative reform in the field of peacekeeping operations should be comprehensive and balanced so as to address all current shortcomings. It should consider the manner in which the Security Council prepared the mandates for peacekeeping operations and also the participation of troop-contributing countries in preparing, amending and

reviewing those mandates and the tasks involved. The role of the Secretariat in the selection of participating States and in the composition of peacekeeping forces should also be examined. In order to put an end to the chronic financial weakness of the United Nations, all Member States should pay their arrears of contributions and their assessments to the Organization's budgets in full, on time and without conditions. That would enable the Organization to reimburse the amounts owing to the countries that had contributed troops and equipment to peacekeeping operations. The present situation, in which the contributing countries, most of which were developing countries, were paying what was, in his delegation's view, a financial subsidy to the Organization, thereby relieving other Member States of the obligation to bear their share of the financial burden in accordance with the Charter, was unacceptable. There was an urgent need to review the internal rules and methods of work of the Secretariat in order to develop the administrative procedures relating to the participation of States in peacekeeping operations, specifically through the preparation of a memorandum of understanding to improve procedures for the timely reimbursement of States.

7. There were evident failures on the part of the Claims Unit with respect to the handling and settlement of claims. The Secretary-General's proposals would ensure restructuring in that area; his delegation hoped that that would improve the performance of the Unit and make possible the prompt settlement of claims submitted by States that had contributed troops or equipment to peacekeeping operations. There was also a need to reconsider the information in the database for peacekeeping operations pertaining to claims from troop- and equipment-contributing countries, and to include information on the basis of such claims. His delegation had, for example, noticed discrepancies in the amount of claims which had not been explained by the administrative unit responsible for peacekeeping operations.

8. It was necessary to follow the recommendations of the Panel on Peacekeeping Operations regarding the structures proposed for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and for the Department of Political Affairs, as well as for their administrative and financial support. His delegation did not agree in that connection with the recommendations made by ACABQ concerning the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit.

9. The need to maintain the Organization's ability to conduct peacekeeping operations should not mean that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, despite its importance and the wide range of competencies it needed to call on in carrying out its work, should be transformed into a microcosm of the United Nations. Some of the required human and financial resources should be used to support small units within that Department so as to strengthen coordination among the various departments involved in peacekeeping and peace-making activities, including the use of liaison officers.

10. In conclusion, his delegation supported the comments of the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the delays in filling the posts approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and asked for detailed information concerning those posts and the incumbents appointed to them. He would also like to know to what extent the Secretariat had complied with the resolutions of the General Assembly concerning the representation in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of troop- and equipment-contributing countries.

11. **Mr. Shobokshi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government was strongly committed to improving the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping, in line with the Millennium Declaration.

12. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that resource requests for the support account should be justified in their totality; that greater efforts should be made to clarify the relationships between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and offices in the Department of Management; that decision-making on resource requests for peacekeeping required clear indications of continuing and new functions that entailed additional resources, as well as the reasons why current capacity was inadequate; that the functions of the proposed disarmament and humanitarian affairs posts in the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit were not well defined and would be better placed in the substantive departments concerned; that an analysis must be provided of the effect which additional resources in the Personnel Management and Support Service would have on the processing of applications; and that an effective system was needed to manage and monitor personnel actions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management.

13. The Secretariat should use information technology to reduce the period required for the recruitment of staff from 180 days to 90 days, which would include 60 days for the advertisement of vacancies. The Advisory Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should approve seven additional posts under the regular budget and 122 additional posts under the support account; all requests for new posts must be fully justified.

14. **Mr. Gatilov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation's approach to the Secretary-General's proposals was based on recent experience in peacekeeping, the emergence of multifaceted missions and the development of the Organization's human and logistical capacity. He regretted that the proposals did not address all the elements analysed by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, particularly the concept of a strategic reserve to enhance the capacity for rapid and effective deployment, but he noted that proposals in that regard would be submitted at the resumed session early in 2002.

15. He supported the proposal for the establishment of a small secretariat for the Executive Committee on Peace and Security; that would strengthen the Organization's analytical capacity and coordinate the efforts of various United Nations departments and agencies in the light of their capabilities and areas of activity. In view of the complexity of peacekeeping reform, he supported the proposal for the establishment, on a temporary basis, of the post of Director of Management within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to help senior officials to solve day-to-day problems in the implementation of reforms to change the management culture in the Department.

16. The efficiency and effectiveness of the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit could not be enhanced merely through increased staffing; instead, better use should be made of the Unit's existing capacity to collect, analyse and use information received from other units in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Secretariat and the missions themselves, and coordination within the Secretariat should be improved. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations in that regard. The requests for additional resources to strengthen the Military Division and the Civilian Police Division, particularly in areas such as planning, training, analysis and management, were well founded. However, some of the resources requested had no clear and specific link to the creation and strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping capacity.

17. The Advisory Committee's analysis of the Secretary-General's proposals (A/56/478) was exceptionally useful and thorough, and would enhance the Fifth Committee's understanding of the substance of and justification for those proposals from the standpoint of the peacekeeping challenges currently faced by the Organization. The Advisory Committee's conclusions and recommendations were well considered and balanced, and would serve as a good basis for the Fifth Committee's decisions on peacekeeping reform.

18. **Ms. Sun** Minqin (China) said that, in general, the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/55/1024 and Corr.1) supported policies to strengthen the Secretariat's management, planning and mission support capacity. The peacekeeping reform proposals gave priority to the addition of posts and structural improvements in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Her delegation endorsed that approach, and felt that the Fifth Committee should base its discussions on the report of the Special Committee.

19. She hoped that the Secretariat would expedite the submission of a detailed post-by-post justification of its requests for additional staff, as requested by the Special Committee (A/55/1024, para. 83). She shared the views expressed by the Advisory Committee on the presentation of the support account budget estimates (A/56/478, paras. 9 and 10). The use of support-account funds was limited to specific purposes and the level of the support account depended on the level of current peacekeeping activity. Since the additional posts requested under the support account were not clearly and specifically linked to peacekeeping operations, she wondered why regular-budget funding had not been sought for those posts.

20. She hoped that the Special Committee's previous recommendations on enhancing coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other departments would be put into practice. The Special Committee had endorsed the concept of a strategic reserve at the United Nations Logistics Base, but the Secretary-General had not yet submitted a detailed budget proposal in that connection; she hoped that he would do so in the near future.

21. **Mr. Kulyk** (Ukraine) said that, since 1992, Ukraine had contributed troops and equipment to 20 United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Organization's peacekeeping activities, and particularly the Headquarters backstopping function, must be strengthened in view of the increased scope and complexity of those activities. Accordingly, he welcomed the second stage of the implementation of the timely and appropriate recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The Advisory Committee's report provided a valuable basis for the Fifth Committee's consideration of the proposed resource levels under the regular budget and the support account.

22. Once the additional posts requested had been established, they should be filled expeditiously in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/258, with due regard to the proper representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Although that Department and other departments needed additional resources, efforts should also be made to improve working methods and procedures to make optimum use of existing resources. The structural and staffing changes approved by the Committee should reflect the evolving nature of peacekeeping reform and future staffing needs, particularly under the support account, and should be periodically reviewed and adjusted as appropriate.

23. **Mr. Kennedy** (United States of America) said that his delegation, which remained dedicated to improving peacekeeping as a core function of the United Nations, recognized the risks faced by peacekeepers in the field and felt that their welfare was of paramount importance. The report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) (the Brahimi report) had provided a road map for reform and had prompted a number of suggestions and discussions in the Fifth Committee. Thanks to the cooperation shown by Member States, the comprehensive approach to reform in that area was proving its worth.

24. His delegation supported the provision of well-targeted additional capacity for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and related departments. In its latest report on the budgetary implications of specific recommendations, the Secretariat had addressed a number of concerns. His delegation believed that Department when it stated that in order for it to effect change it would require additional support. However, in order to justify any funding request to their capitals, delegations would need to be given more information to substantiate the request.

25. The presentation of the budget could be further improved. Results-based budgeting was crucial if the Committee was to give measured consideration to requests for additional resources. His delegation sought a better understanding of how the new resources would be used, what shortcomings would be addressed and what efforts were being made to optimize the use of existing resources. It welcomed the effort made by the Secretariat to present ideas concerning the strategic reserve at the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi and the consultations with Member States held by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and his staff. Future discussions should be held on rapid deployment planning, including the authority to commit resources before mandates were established.

26. **Mr. Kendall** (Argentina) said that in 2000 the United Nations had embarked on a historic and thorough examination of its peace and security activities with a view to increasing their effectiveness and that the process now under way would have a profound effect on its future operations in that field. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had issued a series of proposals, conclusions and recommendations, and the Fifth Committee must now consider their budget implications.

27. Argentina had been a major contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and his delegation had taken part actively in the debates in the Special Committee. It supported the Special Committee's conclusions and recommendations, which identified ways of improving the management, planning and support of peacekeeping missions by strengthening coordination both within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and between that Department and other departments, and by improving the collection and analysis of information. The safety of United Nations and associated personnel required special attention. Sufficient support must be given to the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator. The Organization must take up the challenges that it faced as quickly and efficiently as possible, and must see the reform process through by providing the resources required when they were justified before the Fifth Committee.

28. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that the Brahimi report had become a milestone in the reform of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and that the time had come for the Fifth Committee to take action on the proposals put forward in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/55/1024), which was based on the recommendations in the Brahimi report.

29. The Advisory Committee had issued recommendations on ways to avoid duplication and had expressed the view that the addition of a number of posts or organizational units would not necessarily improve efficiency. It was, however, surprising that the Advisory Committee had recommended against some 40 per cent of the Secretary-General's requests for new posts.

30. His delegation welcomed the emphasis placed on the integration of human rights into the planning and implementation of international peace operations, and supported the establishment of new posts in that area, especially since the number of peacekeeping operations with human rights components was increasing. His delegation felt that it was particularly important to strengthen the Organization's information and analysis capacity, for example by transforming the Lessons Learned Unit into the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, and by providing that Unit with the required posts. It welcomed the emphasis placed on the importance of civilian police in multifunctional peace operations and underscored the need to focus on the reform of the security sector in peace operations.

31. The strengthening of the Civilian Police Division and the establishment of a criminal law and judicial advisory unit warranted support, as did the integration of civilian components into the Military Division. It was disappointing that the Advisory Committee had failed to support the creation of gender adviser posts in the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit.

32. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) said that there had recently been a surge of interest in ensuring that the required means were available for United Nations peacekeeping activities; the peacekeeping budget had grown to over $3 billion. It was a source of satisfaction that the United Nations was embarking on a new era of peacekeeping operations, in which it not only maintained a fragile peace while awaiting a negotiated settlement of a conflict, but it became involved earlier so as to avert potential disputes. Such activities were more complex and extensive, and required greater capacity on the part of the Organization. The report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations pointed clearly to the shortcomings of the current system.

33. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as the core of United Nations peacekeeping operations, must work with the Security Council, with troop-contributing States and in the field, and it needed additional resources to fulfil its numerous tasks as effectively as possible. Its restructuring could make a positive contribution towards controlling the cost of peacekeeping operations. Morocco was taking part in numerous peacekeeping operations and would like the Department to improve its administrative and financial management. As of 26 September 2001, 43 of the 442 posts allotted to the Department remained vacant, yet more resources were already being requested. The recruitment process was excessively slow. The Department must ensure that the provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258 were implemented.

34. New posts should be filled on the basis of the widest possible geographical distribution, due attention being paid to candidates from troop-contributing States. Any reorganization of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, such as the establishment of new units, must avoid duplication and overlapping mandates, and must remove the administrative inertia that currently beset the Department. The interaction between that Department and the Department of Management must be improved.

35. The support account for peacekeeping operations was intended to be used to improve the management of peacekeeping operations at Headquarters. The strengthening of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should, inter alia, make it possible to improve the financial and administrative services the Department provided for troop-contributing States, for example through the conclusion of memorandums of understanding, letters of assist and certification of claims.

36. His delegation was concerned about the failure to certify claims for equipment damaged in the course of peacekeeping operations, or write-offs. Although it was to be hoped that such situations would not arise in the future, it would be useful to know what provisions applied in such cases. It awaited with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a strategic reserve at the United Nations Logistics Base

in Brindisi, which would be crucial to ensuring the rapid and effective deployment of peacekeeping operations. Lastly, the special attention paid to peacekeeping operations and international security must in no way detract from the Organization's other major fields of action, in particular development.

37. While United Nations peacekeeping operations played an essential role in the maintenance and consolidation of international peace, the settlement of conflicts or crises was first and foremost dependent on the political will to embark on the path of peace and cooperation.

38. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria) said that it was quite clear that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must adapt to the unprecedented increase in the number of complex and diverse tasks assigned to it, and that it required the resources to do so. The Department had to set up and manage several peacekeeping operations at the same time while overseeing a budget of more than $3 billion and tens of thousands of troops, police officers and civilian personnel in the four corners of the earth.

39. The very purpose of the recommendations in the Brahimi report and the report of the Special Committee was to ensure that it could do that job. To that end, the Organization must provide greater coordination and cohesion among the various participants in peacekeeping operations rather than merely concentrating on increasing the number of administrative units in the Department's organizational chart. As the Advisory Committee noted, the Department's structure must be able to adjust in the light of future experience.

40. His delegation fully subscribed to the position outlined by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 9 and 10 of its report. The Secretariat should provide information not only on resources additional to the support account, but on all aspects of the support account budget, and should provide an analysis of the workload instead of simply presenting raw workload statistics. The support account must be used only for its mandated purpose, namely, support for the management by Headquarters of peacekeeping operations in the field. It was not acceptable that posts in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and in oversight services should be funded from its resources.

41. While it endorsed the observations made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 15 of its report, his delegation believed that reclassification was a disguised form of promotion for incumbents, and as such was entirely unacceptable. The lack of transparency in the recruitment, assignment and promotion processes in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was a matter of serious concern, all the more so since the Fifth Committee currently had before it a request for the creation of 129 additional posts in the Department. The 93 posts approved by the General Assembly at the fifty-fifth session had still not all been filled; indeed, as of September 2001, officials had begun working in less than half of those posts. He called on the Secretariat to complete the recruitment of all 93 posts and to provide a list of the candidates already recruited, including information on their nationalities.

42. He regretted that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had been lax in applying rules, regulations and procedures in human resources management. It was for the Office of Human Resources Management to manage and follow up on the recruitment of personnel and to interpret the rules and regulations of the Organization. His delegation had serious reservations about a number of the posts requested, and also about the establishment of new units within the Department. It would follow closely the discussion of the budget implications of such proposals during the Committee's informal consultations.

43. **Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations, particularly its decision to stagger consideration of the proposals relating to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report). It also supported the adoption of the results-based budgeting format for the presentation of the support account estimates, which should sharpen the focus of resource allocation.

44. An integrated management approach to the planning and execution of missions should not necessarily always result in the physical relocation of functional units in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Instead, focal points could be identified within substantive divisions to coordinate those tasks that needed to be functionally integrated. His delegation therefore supported the Advisory Committee's decision not to recommend the setting up

of functional units within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for public information, human rights and gender issues. It would, however, support a recommendation to strengthen existing units within the respective substantive departments.

45. With regard to the estimates of post requirements, his delegation shared the Advisory Committee's view that support account resources were intended primarily to provide additional capacity at Headquarters to manage peacekeeping operations in the field and that the current exercise should therefore not be seen as a general opportunity to request resources that were not clearly and specifically related to the increase in peacekeeping needs. Caution should therefore be exercised in the approval of new posts, especially in light of the difficulty of terminating existing posts. Moreover, posts unrelated to generic peacekeeping activities should be differentiated from those related to specific peacekeeping activities, for which tenure should be firmly linked to time-bound and mission-specific activities.

46. The Secretariat should ensure that all of the additional 93 posts that had been approved by the General Assembly in resolution 55/238 were fully encumbered, bearing in mind the letter and spirit of Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter and the concerns that had been expressed about the need for commensurate recruitment into the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of qualified nationals of troop-contributing countries, which were at the forefront of peacekeeping.

47. The changing practice in respect of memorandums of understanding for peacekeeping missions had placed additional responsibilities on troop contributors which, in many instances, were themselves required to mobilize significant resources. His delegation therefore welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the posts which the Secretary-General had proposed for the Finance Management and Support Service should be approved. Ultimately, however, the Organization's financial situation was a major factor in the reimbursement of claims to troop-contributing countries. All Member States should therefore fulfil their obligations in that regard.

48. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said that Nepal, which had lost 42 of its nationals in United Nations peacekeeping operations, recognized the complementary relationship between peace and development. Peacekeeping was one of the core areas of the Secretariat's work that needed strengthening and reform. While his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to promote reforms in that area, progress had been slow, partial and inadequate and a more comprehensive and conscientious effort was needed.

49. His delegation was disappointed at the slow pace at which the 93 additional posts that the General Assembly had approved for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were being filled. Furthermore, the Secretary-General had failed to indicate how much of the workload was likely to be alleviated or whether performance would improve when the posts were filled. It would be interesting to know whether, in filling those posts, the principle of geographical representation had been respected and justice had been done to troop-contributing countries.

50. There appeared to be room for far-reaching reforms to eliminate duplication between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Management and between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management. Those possibilities should be exhausted, since the mere addition of personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would be of little help, especially over the longer term. Requests for additional posts while a substantial number of vacancies remained unfilled did not provide not provide reassurance that enough was being done to streamline the time-consuming recruitment procedure and maximize efficiency. Instead, the creation of mini-substantive units within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would further increase inter-departmental duplication of work.

51. Turning to the statement submitted by the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23 (A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1), he said it was hard to understand why, despite the Advisory Committee's repeated suggestions, the Secretariat still did not use workload indicators to justify its requests for resources. That failure was inconsistent with the Secretariat's eagerness to embrace results-based budgeting. Reforms should be carried out on the basis of objective analysis and rational justification and not on the basis of expediency and expectations, which had given rise to a wide divergence between the Secretariat's requests, the Advisory Committee's recommendations and what the

Fifth Committee could reasonably approve. His delegation was tempted to conclude that the Secretariat had been overwhelmed by the "safety margin syndrome" commonly found in the United Nations and elsewhere.

52. His delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's cautionary note that the current exercise to implement the recommendations of the Brahimi report should not be seen as a general opportunity for the Secretariat to request resources that were not clearly and specifically related to peacekeeping needs. Such tendencies would be detrimental to the Secretariat's credibility and his delegation would have serious difficulties with requests that were motivated by expediency, personal interests and fuzzy arguments. Efforts must continue to rationalize the use of existing resources and to maximize output through their more efficient use.

53. His delegation was satisfied with the Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the Department of Management to equip it to provide adequate backstopping for the current level of peacekeeping operations and its recommendation concerning non-post resources for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It welcomed, in particular, the recommendation that the effect of such changes as might be approved by the General Assembly should be assessed by 2004 to ensure that what had been implemented continued, in both size and structure, to represent the most appropriate response to the peacekeeping needs of the United Nations. Indeed, the periodic assessments should begin at an earlier date.

54. Lastly, developing troop-contributing countries should be adequately represented in the restructured Department of Peacekeeping Operations, particularly at senior levels, so as to reflect their contributions to peacekeeping operations and to ensure the achievement of the Department's objectives.

55. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that the significant increase in the level of resources allocated for peacekeeping activities reflected the importance which the General Assembly attached to those activities. Her delegation was of the view, however, that there had been no programmatic or operational need for the additional resources which the Assembly had approved in resolution 55/238 for the creation of 93 additional posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and 2 additional posts in the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs. In practical terms, the additional resources that had been proposed for the regular budget and for the support account placed peacekeeping in a privileged position compared with other equally important development-related activities, which were subject to careful scrutiny and were expected to do more with less. While her delegation recognized the importance of peacekeeping activities, that imbalance should be carefully considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

56. The report of the Advisory Committee contained useful observations, particularly those concerning the need to carry out the reform of peacekeeping activities not only through additional posts and non-staff resources, but also through improved coordination and efficiency. The observations that seemed to call into question the justification for requests for posts in the absence of any visible relationship between the proposals and the increased needs of peacekeeping operations also gave cause for concern. Several of the proposals related to posts that were aimed at increasing the backstopping capacity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations by expanding its management structure, increasing the number of administrative units, duplicating the functions carried out by other departments and creating new and ill-defined functions, all of which tended to underestimate the Department's existing capacities.

57. Her delegation noted with concern that the Secretariat had used the report to request indiscriminately resources that should be considered within the programmatic context, taking into account existing capacities within the Secretariat. She had hoped that, in the context of a results-based management culture and limited resources, the Secretariat's proposals would have been aimed at ensuring a more efficient use of resources. Furthermore, despite the urgency with which the 93 additional posts had been approved for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to date only 44 of them had been filled. She supported an open and in-depth analysis of the proposals for posts, based on merit, as well as the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Assembly should, after a period of time, assess the effect of such changes as it might approve in order to ensure that what had been implemented continued, in both size and structure, to represent the most

appropriate response to the peacekeeping needs of the United Nations.

58. While her delegation shared the view that the promotion of human rights in an area covered by a peacekeeping mission did not necessarily end or decline when the mandate of the mission concerned was terminated, it disagreed with the Advisory Committee's approach that consisted in recommending posts on the basis of general needs, in disregard of the principles governing the operation of the support account and the regular budget.

59. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that, as a major contributor of troops and equipment, India had always considered peacekeeping to be one of the Organization's core functions. His delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's view that more justification was needed for the totality of resources requested for peacekeeping activities. Vague explanations by the Secretariat were not sufficient. Redeployment and the downward reclassification of posts should form an integral part of the analysis of needs.

60. In the debate on the support account, emphasis should be placed on the more crucial areas of peacekeeping activities, which included the strengthening of the Office of Operations, the Office of Mission Support, the Administrative Support Division, the Logistics Support Division, the Military Division and the Civilian Police Division. Given the nature of the posts that had been approved under the support account, their number and level should be periodically reviewed in order to justify their continued existence.

61. On the subject of the Travel and Vendor Claims Unit, the Secretariat had provided vague explanations the previous May as to why, despite the Assembly's approval, the Unit had not been strengthened. The recommendations of the Board of Auditors that three posts should be transferred to the Field Management and Support Service had also not been heeded. His delegation hoped that the Fifth Committee's recommendations would in future be fully and promptly implemented by the Secretariat and that there would be greater representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

62. **Mr. Blanco Domínguez** (Dominican Republic) said that the divergences noted between the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/55/46 and Add.1) and the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/478) were a cause of concern. His delegation had serious reservations about the recruitment of additional staff and the reclassification of existing posts. It believed that the strengthening of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be more comprehensive than the measures that had been proposed and that the Department's capacity to respond rapidly and effectively should be improved on a more lasting basis.

63. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) noted with satisfaction the Committee's continuing recognition that the Secretariat must have adequate resources in order to be able to provide support to peacekeeping operations. He wished to assure the members that the Administration would continue to use the resources at its disposal as efficiently and effectively as possible.

64. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had requested the Secretariat to conduct a dialogue with Member States on issues connected with the establishment of a strategic reserve at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi. Those consultations had now taken place and the Secretariat was in the process of preparing a paper on the concept, which would be made available to the Advisory Committee early in 2002 and to the Fifth Committee in time for the second part of the resumed fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

65. Regarding the 93 additional posts for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations approved by the General Assembly in resolution 55/238, he said that the recruitment process, which had been conducted by the Department in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, had proceeded with exceptional speed. The views of the Special Committee and the General Assembly concerning proper representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department had been fully taken into account. Since 10 September 2001, a further 22 staff members had come on board. All but a handful of the remaining vacancies would be filled within the next few weeks.

66. The Administration would be using the results-based budgeting format in the presentation of the next support account budget estimates, as mandated by the General Assembly. He trusted that the new format would enhance the quality of future support account budget documents.

Agenda item 126: Human Resources Management (*continued*)

Consultants (*continued*) (A/55/59 and Add.1, A/55/321 and A/55/451; A/56/7 and A/56/16)

Delegation of authority (*continued*) (A/55/857 and Add.1; A/56/7)

67. **Mr. Li** Taizhang (China) said that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on young professionals in selected organizations of the United Nations system: recruitment, management and retention (A/55/798) had highlighted the rapid ageing of the staff of the United Nations. The Secretariat must take measures to address that serious problem as soon as possible. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of JIU. It also called on the Secretariat to expedite the recruitment of young candidates who had passed the National Competitive Recruitment Examination and to reduce the age-limits beyond which candidates could not take competitive recruitment examinations.

68. Closely related to the problem of the ageing of the staff of the United Nations was the practice of the language services of the Secretariat of hiring large numbers of retirees and temporary personnel. His delegation was not opposed to the appropriate use of qualified retirees and temporary personnel, especially when there were many meetings. It was concerned, however, that some language services were employing persons who were too old and that, in some cases, retirees and temporary personnel outnumbered the regular staff. One consequence of that anomalous situation was the lowering of the quality of interpretation and translation. There was little basis for the argument that the employment of retirees and locally recruited temporary personnel resulted in cost savings. In fact, the failure to utilize young candidates who passed competitive recruitment examinations or underwent specialized United Nations training was in itself wasteful. Currently, there were not sufficient staff to deal with the heavy workload of the language services. That problem should be addressed by increasing the number of regular posts while reducing the number of temporary personnel, taking into account the need to rejuvenate the staff of the United Nations.

69. Lastly, his delegation was concerned that the principle of the equality of the six official languages was not being respected. While Chinese was an official language of the United Nations, some entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Civil Service Commission and the Commission on Human Rights, did not issue important documentation in Chinese. In addition, the Chinese web site had only one temporary post, the Editorial and Documents Control Section at the United Nations Office at Geneva had never employed a Chinese editor, and the Asia radio unit of the Department of Public Information did not have a P-4 post or a Chinese national on its staff. It was to be hoped that those inequalities would be rectified.

70. **Ms. Sarijalinskaya** (Azerbaijan) said that, while her delegation supported the proposal made at the Committee's previous meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China that the substantive consideration of the current item should be deferred to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, she wished to make a number of points regarding the observations of the Advisory Committee on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of consultants in the United Nations (A/55/59) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/55/59/Add.1).

71. The Advisory Committee had questioned the utility of taking the desirable ranges used for Professional staff financed through the regular budget as a norm for the geographical distribution of consultancy. However, her delegation considered that such a measure would be acceptable on a temporary basis pending adoption by the General Assembly of a methodology for achieving geographical balance in the use of consultants. Her delegation shared the Advisory Committee's concern that a system for accurate data collection, analysis and reporting on consultants and individual contractors had yet to be established. There was a need to expedite the full deployment of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which would facilitate the creation of an inventory of skills within the Secretariat thus avoiding the unnecessary and wasteful hiring of outside consultants. It would, however, be appropriate to use highly qualified local consultants if that was more cost-effective than the dispatch of experts from the Secretariat. Her delegation considered that the main criteria in selecting consultants should be cost-effectiveness and the quality of the services provided. Greater use of consultants from developing countries

and countries with economies in transition would satisfy both those requirements.

72. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia), referring to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the delegation of authority for management of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat and the Secretary-General's comments thereon (A/55/857 and Add.1), said that a system for the delegation of authority required a reliable and comprehensive system of assessment. His delegation believed that performance criteria should be more specific and that performance evaluation should be undertaken in the light of specific objectives.

73. His delegation considered that the authority delegated should be clearly defined in a special document assigning authority to specific staff members and specifying, in particular, the original source of authority, a description of the authority to be delegated with clear objectives, any limitations imposed, including any limitation on sub-delegation, citation of any previous delegations which were to be revised or rescinded, if appropriate, the date on which the delegation was to become effective and a statement of the duration of the delegation.

74. He also supported the creation of an accountability committee which would assist in promoting accountability at higher levels of administrative authority. It was necessary to ensure that there was an effective dialogue between the administration and the staff and that opinions and proposals from staff members were taken into consideration.

75. His delegation also supported recommendation 5 in the JIU report concerning the need to take additional steps towards the establishment, throughout the Secretariat, of a culture of clarity, transparency and communication.

76. Referring to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of consultants in the United Nations (A/55/59), he said that his delegation supported the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit that the Office of Human Resources Management should review all consultancy requests to ascertain whether the required expertise was available "in house". It was also important to ensure an appropriate geographical balance in the employment of consultants.

77. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation supported the proposal made at the Committee's previous meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China regarding the procedure for the consideration of the current item. However, it wished to appeal to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management to ensure that documents and public statements regarding General Assembly resolution 55/258 accurately reflected the negotiating process that had led to the resolution's adoption. The general view was that the Assembly had given a green light to the Secretary-General's proposals for human resources management reform. In fact, delegations had worked hard to reach agreement on some of the measures contained in the package and had had to make compromises in order to satisfy the needs of both Member States and the Secretariat.

78. **Mr. Fedorov** (Russian Federation) expressed regret that a number of matters relating to human resources management had not been considered by the Committee during its deliberations on the current item. The report of the Secretary-General on excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and issues relating to the recruitment of language staff (A/56/277), for example, had been taken up under item 124, Pattern of conferences. Indeed, it had not even been listed among the documents pertaining to the current item.

79. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee was considering only two issues under agenda item 126, namely, the use of consultants and delegation of authority. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the delegation of authority for management of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat (A/55/857) and the Secretary-General's comments thereon (A/55/857/Add.1) had been considered by the Committee at the fifty-fifth session. On the basis of a recommendation by the Committee, the General Assembly, in its decision 55/481, had endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Unit and decided to consider the observations of the Advisory Committee thereon at its fifty-sixth session. Since the Fifth Committee had now been apprised of the Advisory Committee's views, it should simply call on the Secretary-General to implement the Unit's recommendations, taking fully into account the

observations of the Advisory Committee. Informal consultations on the issue were not necessary. As to the use of consultants, the relevant reports had been considered by the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC), which had supported some of the JIU recommendations while expressing reservations with regard to others. The Advisory Committee, for its part, had provided only observations on the issue. He therefore urged the Fifth Committee simply to endorse the recommendations of CPC and to call on the Secretary-General to take the relevant observations of the Advisory Committee fully into account. His delegation believed that such a course of action would constitute a satisfactory means of disposing of the current item, enabling the Fifth Committee to focus its efforts on the proposed programme budget.

80. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium) said that the Committee needed time for reflection before taking any action on the two issues before it.

81. **The Chairman** suggested that the informal consultations should take place as scheduled.

82. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work

83. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) expressed concern that the Committee was to take up in informal consultations that afternoon three parts of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, comprising 14 sections in all. While it was important to use the Committee's time as efficiently as possible, the current programme of work did not give delegations sufficient time to prepare in order to be able to participate effectively in the discussions on the proposed programme budget; that was particularly regrettable since the individual sections were not to be taken up in formal meetings. In future, the programme of work should be more realistic.

84. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau would take those concerns into account.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 2 November 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/56/101; A/C.5/56/5)

1. **The Chairman** said that, as indicated in document A/56/101, the terms of office of six members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) would expire on 31 December 2001. Document A/C.5/56/5 contained the names of seven persons nominated by their respective Governments to fill the resulting vacancies. He had been informed, however, that, in a note verbale dated 31 October 2001 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Asian States for the month of October, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia had indicated that his Government had withdrawn the candidacy of Mr. Brotodiningrat. Since the number of candidates from the three regional groups, namely, the Group of Asian States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States was now equal to the number of vacancies for each group, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the six candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the Advisory Committee for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2002.

2. *Mr. Crom (Netherlands), Ms. Incera (Costa Rica), Mr. Saha (India), Ms. Sun Minqin (China), Mr. Takahara (Japan) and Mr. Thorne (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) were recommended for appointment to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.*

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions (A/56/102; A/C.5/56/6)

3. **The Chairman** said that, as indicated in document A/56/102, the terms of office of six members of the Committee on Contributions would expire on 31 December 2001. Document A/C.5/56/6 contained the names of six persons nominated by their respective Governments to fill the resulting vacancies. Since the number of candidates from the three regional groups, namely, the Group of African States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States, was equal to the number of vacancies for each group, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the six candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2002.

4. *Mr. Fox (Australia), Mr. Greiver (Uruguay), Mr. Hassan (Nigeria), Mr. Iglesias (Argentina), Mr. Kadiri (Morocco), and Mr. Ramos (Portugal) were recommended for appointment to the Committee on Contributions.*

(c) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors (A/56/103; A/C.5/56/7)

5. **The Chairman** drew attention to documents A/56/103 and A/C.5/56/7, in which the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly of the need to appoint the Auditor-General, or officer holding the equivalent title, of a Member State to fill the vacancy that would occur in the membership of the United Nations Board of Auditors on 1 July 2002, and of the nomination by the Government of the Philippines of the Chairman of the Commission of Audit of the Philippines. Since there was only one candidate, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Chairman of the Commission of Audit of the Philippines to the Board of Auditors for a six-year term beginning on 1 July 2002.

6. *The Chairman of the Commission of Audit of the Philippines was recommended for appointment to the United Nations Board of Auditors.*

(d) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee (A/56/104; A/C.5/56/8)

7. **The Chairman** said that, as indicated in document A/56/104, the terms of office of three members of the Investments Committee would expire on 31 December 2001. He drew attention to document A/C.5/56/8, in which the Secretary-General submitted for confirmation by the General Assembly the names of three persons appointed by him to fill the resulting vacancies. Since the number of candidates was equal to

the number of vacancies, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly confirmation of the three persons appointed by the Secretary General to the Investments Committee for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2002.

8. *Mr. Oltramare (Switzerland), Mr. Omaboe (Ghana), and Mr. Reimnitz (Germany) were recommended for appointment to the Investments Committee.*

(f) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission (A/56/106; A/C.5/56/9)

9. **The Chairman** said that, as indicated in document A/56/106, the terms of office of five members of the International Civil Service Commission would expire on 31 December 2001. Document A/C.5/56/9 contained the names of five persons nominated by their respective Governments to fill the resulting vacancies. Since the number of candidates from the three regional groups, namely, the Group of Asian States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the Group of Western European and Other States, was equal to the number of vacancies for each group, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the five candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 2002.

10. *Mr. Bettati (France), Mr. Endo (Japan), Mr. de Médicis (Brazil), Ms. Myers (United States of America) and Mr. Stephanou (Greece) were recommended for appointment to the International Civil Service Commission.*

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.